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Padikkal, Nair power K'taka into 4th Hazare semis

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Complete B'luru civic polls by 30 June: SC tells govt

Asks govt to finalise ward-wise reservation list by 20 February

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the Karnataka government and the state election body to hold the long-pending polls for Bengaluru local body by 30 June.

The tenure of the earlier elected body for Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) expired on 10 September, 2020, and since then a government-appointed administrator was taking care of its day-to-day affairs.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice JK Maheshwari, which fixed the schedule for the poll process, said that the final ward-wise reservation list shall be published by the State government by 20 February, and made it clear that no further extension shall be granted.

The order was passed on a plea of the Karnataka government which has challenged the high court's Decem-ber 2020 order that directed the State Election Commission to hold BBMP elections expeditiously after finalising the electoral rolls.

The tenure of the earlier elected body for Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) expired on 10 September, 2020 **PHOTO: PTI**

The top court is monitoring the compliance of its earlier orders regarding polls to the BBMP and the newly created municipal corporations within the Greater Bengaluru Area (GBA).

The bench took the statement on record and fixed 20 February as the final deadline for publication of the list of reservations.

The bench ordered, "The elections in all circumstances shall be concluded before 30 June 30, 2026."

In its December 2020 judgment, the high court upheld the constitutional validity of the Karnataka Municipal Corporation Third Amendment Act, 2020, which increased the number of BBMP wards.

The High Court had, however, "read down" the amendment, holding that it would not apply to elections that ought to have been held under Article 243 before the amendment came into effect. On 18 December, 2020, the top court stayed the high court order, and in 2022, it asked the state government to complete the process of delimitation of wards for BBMP and to notify the same within a period of eight weeks. *—PTI*

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India, Germany sign 19 deals to navigate global upheaval

AHMEDABAD/NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

India and Germany on Monday announced a major expansion of bilateral cooperation across defence, trade, critical minerals and semiconductors, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz pledged to deepen strategic ties amid global geopolitical upheaval.

Germany also announced visa-free transit for Indian passport holders, boosting people-to-people ties.

Following talks, the two sides signed 19 agreements, including a roadmap for defence industrial collaboration, a pact on higher education cooperation, and a separate agree-ment covering the telecommunications sector. Both leaders also pressed for the early conclusion of the India–European Union free trade agreement to expand trade and in-vestment. On his maiden official visit to India and first trip to Asia as Chancellor, Merz began his visit in Ahmedabad, where he paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi at the Sabarmati Ashram, accompanied by Modi. The two leaders later flew kites together. Modi and Merz reaffirmed their commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific, respect for international law including UNCLOS, and announced a new bilateral Indo-Pacific consul-tation mechanism, amid concerns over China's growing assertiveness.

PM Narendra Modi and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz fly a Hanuman kite at Sabarmati Riverfront, in Ahmedabad on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

They also reiterat-ed strong support for the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). Modi said bilateral trade has reached a record USD 50 billion, injecting "new energy" into the strategic partnership. They discussed the Ukraine war and the Gaza situation. Modi also invited German universities to open campuses in India. *—PTI*

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Iran denies arrest of 6 Indians amid protests

TEHRAN, 12 JAN

Iranian Ambassador to India refuted the claims that at least six Indian nationals had been arrested in Iran during the protests held against Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. He described the reports as false and urged the public to refer only to verified sources.

Taking to social media platform X, Mohammad Fathali noted that misleading news had circulated from various foreign accounts. He said multiple users alleged that Iranian authorities detained ten Afghan and six Indian nationals amid a crackdown on the ongoing protests. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson, Randhir Jaiswal, stated on 10 January that India is closely monitoring developments in Iran. In response to the unrest, the Indian government issued a formal advisory on 5 January, advising Indian citizens to refrain from all non-essential travel to Iran due to the "recent developments."

Protests erupted in December as Iranians took to the streets amidst a collapsing economy, initially sparked by traders responding to the plummeting value of the Iranian Rial. *—PTI*

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Teen gangraped inside moving car in Rajasthan

JAIPUR, 12 JAN

A Class 12 student was reportedly kidnapped and gangraped inside a moving car in the Bikaner district of Rajasthan, according to police statements on Monday. The incident occurred on 6 January in the Napasar area, but a formal complaint was filed by the girl's family only on 11 January.

According to the complaint, the girl left her home for school on the morning of 6 January when two young men intercepted her and abducted her in a car. The accused allegedly drove around for several hours, threatening and raping her turn by turn while the vehicle was in motion.

It was when the car reached a nearby village that local residents became suspicious and stopped the vehicle. Upon forcing the girl out, the perpetrators made their escape. Villagers informed the girl's family, who arrived at the scene and took her home, police revealed.

A case has been registered at Napasar police station under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Circle Officer Gangashahar, Himanshu Sharma, stated that while the girl is over 18 years old, the ages of the accused remain unclear. " *—PTI*

Amid trade impasse, Gor says India is essential to US

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

Signalling a bid to rebuild strained relations, US President Donald Trump's new ambassador to India, Sergio Gor, said on Monday that no country is as essential to the United States as India and confirmed ongoing engagement on a bilateral trade deal.

"Real friends can disagree but always resolve their differences in the end," he said.

In his arrival address, Gor announced an invitation for India to join the US-led 'Pax Silica' alliance on critical minerals and artificial intelligence, which includes Japan, South Korea, the UK and Israel. "It is essential that India and the United States work hand-in-hand from the start of this initiative," he said.

He also hinted that Trump will visit India in the next year or two.

Gor highlighted the personal rapport between Trump and PM Narendra Modi, calling it "real" and crucial to resolving differences, including disputes over tariffs and H1B visas that marked the worst phase in India-US ties in two decades. The downturn followed Trump's 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods, a 25 per cent duty on Russian crude imports, and other policy tensions.

"The US and India are bound not just by shared interests, but by a relationship anchored at the highest levels. Real friends can disagree, but always resolve their differences," Gor said, adding that the next call on the trade deal is scheduled for Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Trump reiterated in an interview that he has "ended eight wars," including conflicts between India and Pakistan. *—PTI.*

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DARUL ULOOM HEAD SAGIR KHAN NO MORE

BENGALURU, 12 JAN

Maulana Sagir Ahmed Khan Rashadi, head of the renowned Islamic seminary Darul Uloom Sabeelur Rashad and State Ameer-e-Shariat, breathed his last on Sunday. A respected Islamic scholar and Sheikh-ul-Hadith, he played a pivotal role in strengthening Islamic education in Karnataka and beyond.

Under his leadership, Darul Uloom Sabeelur Rashad became a prominent centre for religious learning and community guidance in South India.

Maulana Rashadi was also actively involved in social advocacy, coordinating the "Save Waqf, Save Constitution" campaign and leading statewide protests, including a 2022 bandh over the hijab verdict. He guided the community during the Covid-19 pandemic, urging adherence to lockdowns and performing religious duties safely at home.

He played a key role in national movements organised by the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board, including campaigns against the CAA and NRC.

His funeral prayer was scheduled for Monday at 10 am, followed by burial, drawing scholars, students, and community members to pay their respects. *—Salar News*

Aus moves India to 'highest-risk' category, tightens student visa

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

Australia has placed India in the 'highest-risk' category for student visas, tightening scrutiny for Indian applicants by citing emerging integrity risks.

The new classification took effect on 8 January after India was shifted from Evidence Level 2 to Evidence Level 3 under Australia's Simplified Student Visa Framework. Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan are also included in this group.

The Australian administration said the change aims to manage integrity concerns while allowing genuine students to study in the country. This change will assist with the effective management of emerging integrity issues, while continuing to facilitate genuine students seeking a quality education in Australia, it said.

- The re-rating means Indian students will face tighter checks during the visa process, with authorities seeking more documents.

It was reported that the re-rating means Indian students will face tighter checks during the visa process, with authorities seeking more documents and conducting deeper background checks. Bank statements will be manually checked, applicants may be asked for additional English language evidence, and visa officers will have the authority to contact institutions and referees. Processing time is also expected to increase, from around three weeks to up to eight weeks. However, Australia is yet to give a reason for placing India in the highest-risk category. There were instances of fake degree cases in India that drew global attention. India accounts for nearly 1,40,000 of Australia's 6,50,000 international students. *—Agencies*

ICJ hears against Myanmar for Rohingya genocide

THE HAGUE, 12 JAN

During the hearing of Myanmar's Rohingya minority genocide, Gambia's Justice Minister Dawda Jallow on Monday told the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that the Myanmar military intentionally targeted the community in an attempt to destroy it, sources said.

"It is not about esoteric issues of international law. It is about real people, real stories and a real group of human beings. The Rohingya of Myanmar. They have been targeted for destruction," Jallow told ICJ judges. The West African country of Gambia first filed the case at the International Court of Justice in 2019, arguing a so-called "clearance operation" by Myanmar's military in 2017 violated the 1948 Genocide Convention. Now, some 1.2 million members of this persecuted minority are languishing in chaotic, overcrowded camps, where armed groups recruit children and girls as young as 12 are forced into prostitution. *—PTI*

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'ONE BATTLE AFTER ANOTHER' DOMINATES
GOLDEN GLOBES
Los Angeles came alive as Hollywood's biggest stars gathered for the 83rd Golden Globe Awards on Sunday. Host Nikki Glaser returned with a scorching opening monologue, roasting celebrities from Leonardo DiCaprio to George Clooney and Warner Bros.
HERE ARE THE NIGHT'S BIGGEST WINNERS...
Biggest winner: 'ONE BATTLE AFTER ANOTHER'
Best Motion Picture (Musical or Comedy)
Screenplay: PAUL THOMAS ANDERSON
Female Supporting Actor: TEYANA TAYLOR
Director: Paul Thomas Anderson
Best Actor (Musical or Comedy): TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET — 'MARTY SUPREME'
Best Actress (Drama): Jessie Buckley — 'Hamnet'
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MISSES ORBIT
ISRO's PSLV-C62 rocket fails due to 'anomaly' in third stage
ISRO's PSLV-C62 carrying the EOS-N1 lifts off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh, on Monday
PHOTO: PTI

SRIHARIKOTA, 12 JAN

ISRO's PSLV-C62 rocket carrying 16 satellites, including a foreign Earth Observation payload, failed to place them in the intended orbit after encountering an "anomaly" in the third stage of the launch on Monday.

"Disturbances in the rocket and deviation from the flight path were observed when strap-on motors were providing thrust during the flight's third stage to propel the vehicle to the intended altitude," ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan said, adding a detailed analysis has been initiated to identify the cause.

The mission to place the satellites in the intended orbit could not be achieved, and all 16 satellites were lost in space, ISRO sources told PTI, adding that this was the second consecutive PSLV mission failure during the third stage.

A similar, attempt in May 2025 (PSLV-C61-EOS-09) also did not succeed due to a "motor pressure issue," and there was a fall in the chamber pressure of the motor case. Among the satellites lost were DRDO's Anvesha, a strategic super-eye to unmask military camouflage from nearly 500 km, AayulSAT, India's first in-orbit fuelling satellite, and CGUSAT, a small, student-developed Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite designed primarily for emergency communication and disaster management. The Earth Observation satellite was built jointly by Thailand and the UK. The PSLV-C62 also carried KID, or Kestrel Initial Technology Demonstrator from a Spanish startup that was a small-scale prototype of a re-entry vehicle. *— PTI*

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PHOTO: PTI

Woman held, jewellery worth Rs 30L recovered

SIDLAGATTA, 12 JAN

The Sidlagatta police in Chikkaballapura district have arrested a woman and recovered from her jewellery worth nearly Rs 30 lakh stolen from another woman. bThe arrested, Meena, a native of Jolarpet, staying in Kuppam Venkateswara Layout. The victim boarded a bus from Talagavara in Chikkaballapura district on 19 September and was carrying a box containing jewellery. While alighting from the bus, she felt being pushed by a woman. Later, she opened her bag and found the jewellery box missing. She lodged a complaint with the Sidlagatta rural police. vKushal Chousky, the SP, formed a team headed by SI Satish. The team found the suspect and recovered 240 grams of jewellery worth around Rs 30 lakh. *—Salar news*

Imbalance in Kalyana K'taka to end in 10 years, says CM

He accuses Oppn of spreading lies on govt's financial state

KALABURAGI, 12 JAN

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who on Monday launched projects worth Rs 906 Crore in Yadrami Taluk, asserted that inequality in the Kalyana Karnataka would be a thing of the past in the next one decade.

The event was organised at the KPS School premises in Yadrami by the district administration, Zilla Panchayat, and the Kalyana Karnataka Development Board. He also gave department benefits to the beneficiaries.

The Chief Minister said in the newly declared Yadrami taluk under the Jevargi Assembly constituency, foundation stones were laid for 87 projects worth Rs 867.49 crore and projects worth Rs 38.29 crore had been inaugurated. "In total, development works worth Rs 906 crore have been launched today," he said.

CM Siddaramaiah, Congress Prez Mallikarjun Kharge, DyCM DK Shivakumar, Minister Priyank Kharge with others *PHOTO: X/@SIDDARAMAIAH*

Slamming the opposition BJP, he accused them of spreading misinformation on the government's financial condition for political gains. "They claim that the government has no funds for infrastructure due to the implementation of guarantee schemes. If the government were bankrupt, it would not be possible to spend Rs 906 crore in a single constituency," the Chief Minister asserted.

The government has already spent over Rs 1.12 lakh crore and implemented all major programmes within a span of one year of taking charge, fulfilling the promise it had made to the people. "People should understand that this government stands by its word," Siddaramaiah said.

The CM claimed that out of the 592 promises made in the party manifesto, 243 had already been kept. He said in contrast, the BJP had failed to fulfil even 10 per cent of the 600 promises it made while in power from 2018.

In the Kalyana Karnataka region, the CM said, 19 taluks were sanctioned during the BJP tenure. He said only two buildings were constructed. "Our government has sanctioned 17 taluks, approved 97 Nada Kacheri offices, and ensured construction across 25 taluks in the region," he pointed out. *—Agencies*

'SOMNATH SWABHIMAN PARV'

PM celebrated Somnath with eye on polls: Kharge

KALABURAGI, 12 JAN

Citing the recent celebrations of 'Somnath Swabhiman Parv', Gujarat, to mark 1,000 years since the first attack on the temple, Congress President **Mallikarjun Kharge** on Monday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his party BJP, of using religion and God to garner votes, keeping in mind the upcoming elections in several states.

The Congress President was speaking at an event in Yadrami taluk.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy CM DK Shivakumar, and several ministers of the state government were present.

Kharge asked why the BJP had not remembered to hold the Somnath temple event until now.

"It has come to their mind now because of the upcoming elections, whether it is in Assam or West Bengal or Tamil Nadu or Puducherry," he charged.

The Congress President called on the people to stay united against the attempts to divide them in the name of religion. He said,"...there is a loot in the name of God and religion. They (Modi and BJP) are trying to gain votes in their (God and religion) name.

The AICC president also lambasted the Modi government at the Centre for repealing the UPA-era rural employment law MGNREGA and replacing it with a new VB-G RAM G act, Kharge said. This is a direct attack on employment for the poor and ultimately filling their stomachs, he said.

In response to a question from reporters on when the CM and Deputy CM would be summoned to Delhi for talks Kharge said, "Whenever necessary, the party would call them." *—PTI*

- The Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge called on the people to stay united against the attempts to divide them in the name of religion.

Man assaulted on suspicion of being B'deshi in M'luru

MANGALURU, 12 JAN

Police have registered a case against four men for allegedly assaulting a migrant labourer from Jharkhand, suspecting him of being a Bangladeshi national. The incident occurred on Sunday in Kulur, on the outskirts of Mangaluru.

According to authorities, the victim has been working in Mangaluru for 10–15 years, staying in the city for four to six months annually for employment. The accused reportedly confronted him, questioned his nationality, and demanded identity documents. Despite the victim insisting he was an Indian citizen, the men allegedly continued to harass him, making objectionable remarks.

When the victim refused to comply further, he was reportedly assaulted with his own tools, sustaining a serious head injury and heavy bleeding. A local woman intervened to rescue him. The victim initially did not report the assault to police due to fear, returning home instead. The case came to light after local leaders raised concerns and demanded action.

Authorities verified that the victim is an Indian citizen. Based on the findings, the accused have been booked under Sections 126(2) (wrongful restraint), 109 (attempt to murder), and several sections of the BNS, including 352, 351(3), 353, 118(1) r/w 3(5), said Sudhir Kumar Reddy, Commissioner of Police, Mangaluru city.

The accused, residents of Kulur, are to be arrested immediately *—PTI*

Voter roll for local polls will be out by 16 March: SC

>>>CONTINUED FROM 1

During the hearing, senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, representing the Karnataka government, said the ward-wise reservation exercise is underway and will be completed within a month. Senior advocate KN Phanindra, for the SEC, informed the court that the final voter list will be published by 16 March, taking board and college exams into account. Schools and colleges will serve as polling stations, with teachers deployed for election duties. Board exams are expected to end by May, allowing polls thereafter.

The next elections will cover 369 wards across five municipal corporations, up from 198 wards in the previous civic polls. *—PTI*

New South Wales varsity to open B'luru campus

BENGALURU, 12 JAN

The University of New South Wales (UNSW), one of Australia's leading universities, will open its Bengaluru campus at Manyata Tech Park in August 2026.

The agreement was signed on Monday in the presence of Minister for Large and Medium Industries MB Patil and Higher Education Minister MC Sudhakar.

At a programme held at Vidhana Soudha, UNSW Vice-Chancellor Attila Brungs and Industries Department Principal Secretary S Selvakumar exchanged the Memorandum of Understanding, Minister Patil's office said in a release.

Initially, the university will offer undergraduate programmes in commerce, media, computer science and data science, along with a postgraduate programme in cyber security, it said.

After interacting with the delegation, Patil said the academic council of UNSW would directly oversee the City campus, with the same curriculum taught here as at the parent university. With several leading companies located at the Tech Park, students will benefit from strong industry exposure and skill-oriented learning, he said.

Patil noted that an education and research cooperation programme between India and Australia for 2025-30 is currently in force. He added that UNSW already has close academic and institutional links with organisations. *—PTI*

'G RAM G is anti-poor and anti-Dalit'

MYSURU, 12 JAN

Karnataka Social Welfare Minister and Mysuru district in-charge HC Mahadevappa on Monday termed the newly enacted Viksit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM (G)) as anti-poor and anti-Dalit.

Speaking to reporters here, Mahadevappa said that even though MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) had helped crores of people every year, especially during the Covid pandemic, the Union government scrapped it due to its alleged hatred towards Gandhi Ji.

The minister condemned the Centre's decision to replace MNREGA with VB-G RAM G. He alleged that the new law deprives agriculture labourers belonging to all communities of livelihood opportunities. He said the Act would also increase financial burden of every state. *—Salar News*

BJP urges Guv to reject Hate Speech Bill

BENGALURU, 12 JAN

A delegation of Karnataka BJP legislators on Monday urged Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot against giving his assent to the Hate Speech Bill, calling it "draconian", and a "direct attack on free speech" and "a tool for political vendetta".

The delegation led by the Leaders of Opposition in both the Legislative Assembly and Council, R Ashoka and Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, respectively, who called on the Governor, also submitted a memorandum demanding a CBI probe into Ballari clashes, and the state government's action in connection with the demolition of illegally constructed houses in Kogilu.

The BJP leaders submitted a petition alleging erosion of law and order, and misuse of police machinery in the state, while highlighting the police's alleged role in the disrobing of a woman BJP worker in Hubballi.

BJP leaders met Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot at Lok Bhavan, Bengaluru on Monday over the Hate Speech Bill *PHOTO: SALAR*

- BJP leaders submitted a petition alleging erosion of law and order, and misuse of police machinery in the state, while highlighting the police's alleged role in disrobing of a woman BJP worker in Hubballi.

"We informed the Governor that the law and order situation in the state has deteriorated. Karnataka has become a jungle raj. As the first citizen of the state and as all government orders are issued under his name, we have requested him to save Karnataka from becoming a goonda state," Ashoka said.

Speaking to reporters later, Ashoka alleged that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Speaker U T Khader ensured the passage of the Hate Speech Bill in the Assembly without any discussion. He said the bill was nothing but a repeat of "cunningness" by the ruling Congress, as it is similar to the imposition of Emergency by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. "We have told the Governor that if the assent is given to the bill, it will take away the rights of the media and opposition parties, as the state will turn into a police state," he said.

The BJP leaders further accused the state government of indulging in "Muslim appeasement politics". They questioned the swiftness with which the state government moved to rehabilitate those who had indulged in illegal encroachment. *—PTI*

PROTEST AGAINST DEMOLITIONS

Members of the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) protest at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Monday against the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) for the demolition of houses at Thanisandra and Kogilu *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

Not only farmers from across Karnataka, but also hundreds from Andhra Pradesh arrived with their bullocks to participate *PHOTO: ANI*

C'ballapur sees bullock cart racing

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 12 JAN

As part of the Sankranti festivities, a thrilling bullock cart race organised by the Raithamitra Balaga at Huduguru village in Gauribidanur,

Chikkaballapur district, left spectators on the edge of their seats. Not only farmers from across Karnataka, but also hundreds from Andhra Pradesh arrived with their bullocks to take part in the competition.

The event was held continuously for three days at Huduguru village, with 50 pairs of bullocks competing. As the bullocks sprinted across the track, the skill of the drivers steering the carts drew applause from the crowd. Thousands of spectators from Gauribidanur and distant villages gathered to witness the event.

Speaking at the inauguration, an organiser said, "In this era of rapid mechanisation, the use of bullocks is declining. Organising an inter-state level competition like this gives new life to our traditional rural sports. Preserving indigenous breeds such as the Hallikar is the collective responsibility of all of us."

Meanwhile, with Makar Sankranti just a few days away, Gujarat celebrated the International Kite Festival, one of the biggest highlights of the state's Uttarayan celebrations. *—ANI*

WOMEN'S BODY OBJECTS

Yash's 'Toxic' in trouble for 'obscene' teaser as AAP files plaint

BENGALURU, 12 JAN

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday filed a complaint with the Karnataka State Women's Commission (KSWC) objecting to alleged obscene scenes in the teaser of the Kannada film 'Toxic', starring Yash, and sought prompt action.

Leaders of the party's women's wing met KSWC officials and submitted the complaint, claiming the teaser's content "causes serious harm to the social well-being of women and children" and "degrades the dignity of women while insulting Kannada culture," said AAP state secretary Usha Mohan.

The letter urged the commission to direct the state authorities to ban the teaser and remove it from social media, citing its adverse impact on society, especially minors.

The teaser, released on 8 January to mark Yash's 40th birthday, introduced him as 'Raya'. Directed by Geetu Mohandas, the film is Yash's first project since the 2022

blockbuster 'KGF: Chapter 2'. The film, produced by KVN Productions, also features Nayanthara, Huma Qureshi, Kiara Advani, and Rukmini Vasanth, with Rajeev Ravi handling cinematography, Ravi Basrur composing music, and Ujwal Kulkarni editing.

The release has sparked debate on social media.

While some viewers accused the film of "objectifying women" and questioned the director given her past statements critical of such portrayals, others defended the teaser and the film's team.

'Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups' is scheduled for release on 19 March, 2026, and the AAP's complaint seeks to uphold what it terms the "cultural and moral values" of the State. *—PTI*

- Leaders of the party's women's wing met KSWC officials and submitted the complaint, claiming the teaser's content "causes serious harm to the social well-being of women and children" and "degrades the dignity of women while insulting Kannada culture," said AAP state secretary Usha Mohan.

Bangalore airport passenger traffic rises 8% in 2025

MUMBAI, 12 JAN

Bangalore International Airport saw passenger traffic at its facility growing 8 per cent year-on-year to 43.82 million in 2025, driven by rising demand, expanding international connectivity, and sustained infrastructure investments, BIAL said on Monday.

In 2024, the airport reported a passenger traffic of 40.73 million.

Besides, the airport handled 520,985 metric tonnes of cargo in CY 2025, registering a 5 per cent year-on-year increase over CY 2024, Bangalore International Airport Ltd (BIAL) said.

BIAL said in 2026, it will continue to focus on strengthening global connectivity, expanding airline partnerships and scaling up capacity across passenger and cargo operations, with the objective of enabling seamless travel experiences and supporting long-term growth of Bengaluru as a global aviation and business hub.

Air traffic movements (flights arrivals and departures) peaked at 837 on 19 October last year while the average daily count for the year stood at 765, reflecting sustained growth in flight activity across the network, it said.

The airport also advanced from third to second place in the number of domestic flights operated among Indian airports, it said, adding that international connectivity gathered strong momentum during the year, with average daily international departures increasing from 38 in 2024 to 51 in 2025, translating into a 28.7 per cent year-on-year growth in international passenger traffic.

The airport recorded its highest-ever single-day count of 1,37,317 passengers on 23 November, 2025, BIAL added. *—PTI*

QUOTE of THE DAY

Hindutva is Hinduism in paranoia

—MANI SHANKAR AIYAR, Veteran Congress Leader

AI-driven digitisation errors afflicting SIR: Didi to CEC

She terms process illogical and contrary to Constitution

KOLKATA, 12 JAN

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday wrote to Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, alleging AI-driven digitisation errors in the 2002 electoral rolls were causing hardship to genuine voters during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise.

In her fifth letter, Banerjee said data mismatches wrongly flagged electors as having "logical discrepancies", forcing them to re-establish identity despite earlier quasi-judicial corrections. She termed the process "arbitrary, illogical and contrary to the Constitution", alleging hearings were mechanical and insensitive.

Citing human cost, she claimed the exercise had seen 77 deaths, four suicide attempts and 17 hospitalisations, and criticised the questioning of women voters and harassment of eminent citizens.

Amid the row, the Election Commission indicated possible disciplinary action against Mousam Sarkar, Assistant Electoral Registration Officer of Bagnan, for publicly questioning SIR discrepancies. The CEO's office said he violated service discipline, while Sarkar said he acted in public interest.

Banerjee urged the EC to end "harassment and agony" and safeguard democratic rights.

SC seeks EC reply on SIR irregularities claims in WB

The Supreme Court on Monday sought a response from the Election Commission on fresh interim pleas by Trinamool Congress MPs Derek O'Brien and Dola Sen alleging arbitrariness and procedural irregularities in the SIR of electoral rolls in Bengal.

A bench led by CJI Surya Kant granted the poll panel one week to file a common reply and listed the matter for 19 January. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal said SIR instructions were being issued through WhatsApp and oral directions, making booth-level officers act without formal orders. He flagged a new "logical discrepancy" voter category, triggering quasi-judicial hearings without statutory basis.

The pleas alleged mass deletions, claiming 58,20,898 names were dropped without notice after the draft roll was published on 16 December, 2025. They sought an extension of the 15 January deadline for claims and objections and directions to stop informal communications. The EC sought time to respond. The court emphasised due process and electoral fairness standards. —*PTI*

In her fifth letter, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said data mismatches wrongly flagged electors as having "logical discrepancies", forcing them to re-establish identity despite earlier quasi-judicial corrections **PHOTO: PTI**

Mamata destroyed key evidence during I-PAC raids: ED to apex court

The Enforcement Directorate on Monday moved the Supreme Court seeking directions to register an FIR against West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, the DGP and Kolkata police commissioner, alleging obstruction of a money laundering probe linked to I-PAC. The ED said officials were intimidated, evidence was snatched and electronic material destroyed, claiming "protectors of law became party to a cognisable offence". It alleged disruptions in the Calcutta High Court prevented hearing a CBI probe plea. The agency cited interference during searches at I-PAC's Kolkata office and director Pratik Jain's residence in a coal pilferage case. The state filed a caveat. Banerjee denied the charges, accusing the ED of political vendetta and overreach ahead of elections. She rejected allegations outright publicly. —*Agencies*

Bengal BLOs protest deaths, stress during SIR

Bengal booth-level officers on Monday protested outside the Chief Electoral Officer's office, alleging EC apathy over deaths and extreme stress during the electoral roll revision. Members of the BLO Adhikar Raksha Committee said crushing workloads caused mental and physical breakdowns, with several officers dying since the exercise began, and demanded compensation, workload rationalisation and immediate intervention.

AGAINST CODE OF CONDUCT

The SEC said no advance payment is permitted during the poll period, rejecting claims of transfer before Sankranti **PHOTO: PTI**

No 'Ladki Bahin' aid before polls: SEC to M'rashtra

MUMBAI, 12 JAN

With municipal polls due on 15 January, Maharashtra politics saw parallel flashpoints on Monday, spanning welfare schemes, candidate nominations, manifestos and civic power struggles.

The State Election Commission barred the State government from releasing the January instalment of the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana in advance, citing the model code of conduct. While regular pending instalments may continue, the SEC said no advance payment is permitted during the poll period, rejecting claims of a Rs 3,000 combined transfer before Makar Sankranti. Congress termed the move voter inducement, while Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis maintained the scheme was continuous.

In Mumbai, the Bombay High Court declined urgent hearing on a plea by the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena challenging Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Kishori Pednekar's BMC nomination over alleged suppression of FIRs, saying it would hear the matter after polls.

In Thane, the Shinde-led Shiv Sena released its civic manifesto, promising a slum-free city, a 260-metre viewing tower and accelerated cluster redevelopment, while Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde campaigned for Mahayuti candidates, asserting welfare schemes were permanent.

Political churn was evident in Ambernath, where Shiv Sena-backed NCP councillor Sadashiv Hender Patil defeated the BJP nominee to become municipal vice-president, amid ruckus and shifting alliances. The Shiv Sena also attacked MNS chief Raj Thackeray, accusing him of misleading Marathi voters and lacking a civic roadmap. The developments underscored intense three-cornered contests across urban Maharashtra, with welfare politics, alliance tensions and governance claims dominating campaigns, as parties sought last-minute momentum ahead of high-stakes elections statewide amid heightened scrutiny by authorities. —*PTI*

Ex-VP Dhankhar hospitalised after fainting episodes

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

Former vice president Jagdeep Dhankhar was admitted to the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on Monday after experiencing two episodes of unconsciousness on 10 January, said officials. Dhankhar, 74, underwent an MRI, with additional tests scheduled for Tuesday. Officials revealed he "had two bouts of unconsciousness" in the washroom around 3.30am on 10 January. "Today, he had gone to AIIMS for a checkup when the doctors insisted that he should get admitted for tests. He will remain there overnight," they added. Dhankhar has previously fainted at various public events during his vice-presidency. He resigned on 21 July, citing health issues, and was also admitted to AIIMS last year for a heart ailment. —*PTI*

J'khand BJP chief, national council elections today

RANCHI, 12 JAN

The election for Jharkhand BJP president and national council members will be held on 13 January in Ranchi, a party official said on Monday. The BJP has already appointed Union Minister Jual Oram as the party's State Election Officer for Jharkhand to oversee the elections. BJP state General Secretary Pradip Verma said the election schedule has been announced on the directive of the state election officer. "The nomination process for the election of state president and national council members will be held from 12 noon to 2pm at the state BJP headquarters in Ranchi. The scrutiny will be conducted from 2pm to 3pm, and candidates can withdraw nomination between 3pm and 5pm," Verma said, while addressing media persons here —*PTI*

J&K Democratic Front founder Bazaz dies at 91

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

Bhushan Bazaz, noted social and political thinker and founder of the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Front, died on Monday after a prolonged illness. He was 91. Son of writer-historian Prem Nath Bazaz, he was a principled Kashmiri Pandit voice for brotherhood, peace and Kashmiriyat. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq called him "a father-like presence" and a "true upholder of Kashmiri ethics". Bazaz is survived by his wife and a son today. —*PTI*

Jammu's park to showcase Statue of Unity replica

JAMMU, 12 JAN

A 40foot replica of the Statue of Unity, honouring Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, is under construction at the forthcoming 'waste to wonder park' in Jammu. This initiative aims to merge sustainable waste management with tourism, featuring replicas of 14 iconic monuments primarily crafted from recycled materials. Dr Devansh Yadav, Jammu Smart City Project CEO, emphasised the park's dual goals of recreation and education. —*PTI*

J&K ARE INSEPARABLE: NC CHIEF ON BJP MLA'S BIFURCATION DEMAND

JAMMU, 12 JAN

National Conference (NC) President Farooq Abdullah on Monday firmly rejected a demand by BJP MLA and former minister, Sham Lal Sharma, to grant separate statehood to the Jammu region by bifurcating the Union Territory (UT).

Abdullah asserted that Jammu and Kashmir are inseparable, while Sham Lal Sharma had argued that Jammu faces continued discrimination within the UT.

Abdullah, accompanied by senior party leaders, including Jammu provincial president Rattan Lal Gupta and Scheduled Caste Cell chairman Vijay Lochan, met with office bearers of the Narwal Fruit Mandi Association to discuss their concerns.

Abdullah assured them their issues would be addressed and highlighted the NC-led government's initiatives over the past year. BJP J&K president Sat Sharma sought to distance the party from a controversial proposal. —*PTI*

Vijayan leads 'Satyagraha' march against Centre

T'PURAM, 12 JAN

Kerala witnessed a sharp political confrontation on Monday as Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan led a satyagraha accusing the BJP-led Centre of financially squeezing the State, triggering fierce counterattacks from the BJP and a boycott by the Congress-led UDF.

Addressing ministers and supporters at Palayam Martyrs' Column, Vijayan said Kerala had been forced into an "extraordinary struggle" to protect constitutional rights, alleging arbitrary cuts in grants and borrowing limits. He claimed the State was denied Rs 5,900 crore of the Rs 12,000 crore due between January and March, disrupting welfare schemes, and accused the Centre of political vengeance and centralisation. On X, he said Kerala had suffered a revenue loss of Rs 57,000 crore.

BJP State President Rajeev Chandrasekhar rejected the charges, calling them misleading.

He claimed Kerala received Rs 3.2 lakh crore under the NDA against Rs 72,000 crore during UPA rule, challenged Vijayan to a debate, and cited rising debt. The UDF stayed away, terming the protest political drama. —*PTI*

Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan and others during a protest against alleged financial blockade by the Centre, in Thiruvananthapuram **PHOTO: PTI**

41 LIVES LOST

Karur stampede case: CBI grills TVK chief Vijay for 6 hours

NEW DELHI/CHENNAI, 12 JAN

TVK chief and actor Vijay was questioned for nearly six hours by the Central Bureau of Investigation on Monday in connection with the Karur stampede that killed 41 people and injured over 60, officials said.

Vijay reached the heavily barricaded CBI headquarters in Delhi at 11.29am and was examined by the agency's anti-corruption unit probing the 27 September, 2025 rally-related incident. He left around 6.15pm and will be called again, as some queries require clarification.

The CBI sought his presence on Tuesday, but the actor requested another date citing Pongal, which the agency accepted.

Former Tamil Nadu ADG (law and order) S Davidson Devasirvatham and several TVK office bearers were also questioned. The probe was handed to the CBI after a Supreme Court order and is being monitored by a committee headed by former judge Ajay Rastogi overall.

TVK chief and actor Vijay before departing from Chennai, on Monday. Vijay appeared before the CBI in New Delhi for questioning **PHOTO: PTI**

'Jana Nayagan' maker moves SC over HC order

Producer KVN Productions moved the Supreme Court on Monday challenging a Madras High Court stay on CBFC clearance for Vijay-starrer Jana Nayagan. The stay halted a single judge order clearing the film, billed as Vijay's release before politics and slated for 9 January Pongal debut. Hearing is on 21 January. —*PTI*

ANNAMALAI'S MUMBAI REMARKS TWISTED, BJP MLA CLARIFIES

MUMBAI, 12 JAN

BJP MLA R Tamil Selvan on Monday defended party leader K Annamalai's remarks on Mumbai, calling the "Rasmalai" jibe by Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray a distortion for political gains.

Annamalai, in his 15 January civic poll campaign, described Mumbai as "not a Maharashtra city but an international city," highlighting its global significance under the triple-engine governance of Modi, Fadnavis, and a prospective BJP mayor. Selvan, representing Sion Koliwada, said, "Our leader described Mumbai as a city respected across the world... Annamalai was only saying Mumbai has a global identity." He emphasised that Mumbai cannot be separated from Maharashtra, adding, "Not even a prime minister will be able to do it." The MLA highlighted his record of winning thrice with around 90,000 Marathi voters' support and invoked icons such as Shivaji Maharaj, Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, and Lokmanya Tilak. He criticised the use of foul language against CM Devendra Fadnavis, saying the BJP supports leaders working for public welfare and that appropriate action would follow against those misusing political discourse. —*PTI*

'REPRESENTATION MATTERS'

T'gana mulls civic body seats for transgenders

HYDERABAD, 12 JAN

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Monday proposed co-opting transgender persons as corporators in civic bodies during the upcoming municipal elections, pitching the move as a step towards meaningful political representation.

Addressing an event to inaugurate senior citizens' day care centres, Reddy urged his cabinet colleagues to consider nominating one transgender person in every municipal corporation as a co-opted corporator. "If a transgender person is nominated in every corporation as a corporator, they will have representation in legislative bodies," he said, citing the practice of co-opting minorities in Zilla Parishads and municipalities.

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy **PHOTO: PTI**

Reddy said Telangana had already provided jobs to transgender persons in the Hyderabad police commissionerate and other government departments, and suggested the cabinet take a decision at its next meeting.

The chief minister also announced plans to introduce legislation in the upcoming budget session to deduct 10–15 per cent of the salary of government employees who neglect their elderly parents, with the amount credited directly to the parents' bank accounts. Those failing to care for parents were not fulfilling their social responsibility, he said.

He said the 'Pranam' day care centres for senior citizens were among the first of their kind and a comprehensive health policy would also be unveiled. —*PTI*

China reaffirms territorial claims over Shaksgam Valley

BEIJING, 12 JAN

China on Monday reaffirmed its territorial claims over the Shaksgam Valley in the backdrop of India's objections, stressing that the Chinese infrastructure projects in the area are "beyond reproach".

India had criticised China's infrastructure development projects in the Shaksgam Valley, saying it reserves the right to take necessary measures to safeguard its interests as it is an Indian territory.

Pakistan illegally ceded 5,180sqkm of Indian territory in the Shaksgam Valley to China in 1963 from areas illegally occupied by it.

"We also do not recognise the so-called China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which passes through Indian territory that is under forcible and illegal occupation of Pakistan," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said that "China's infrastructure activities in its own territory are beyond reproach."

It is an economic initiative aimed at local economic and social development and improving people's livelihoods, she said.

"Such agreement and CPEC will not affect China's position on the Kashmir issue," Mao said. —*PTI*

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said China's infrastructure activities in its territory are beyond reproach **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

PHOTO: PTI

SC collegium picks Justice Paul for Calcutta HC CJ post

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

The Supreme Court collegium has recommended the appointment of Justice Sujoy Paul as Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court. The collegium headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, in a meeting held on 9 January, recommended the appointment of Justice Paul. Justice Paul is currently posted as a judge in the Calcutta High Court. His parent high court is in the state Madhya Pradesh. —*PTI*

T'gana man who built his own grave dies, laid to rest

HYDERABAD, 12 JAN

An 80-year-old man in Telangana, who built his own grave while leading a healthy life, passed away on 11 January. A resident of Laxmipuram village, Nakka Indrayya had gained national attention for constructing his own final resting place years in advance, as a peaceful gesture to ensure that his children would face no burden during their time of grief. Indrayya, who built his grave beside his wife's, has placed a plaque at the site inscribed with a message on the eternal truths of life and death. —*PTI*

Jawan killed as fire breaks out in BSF's J&K camp

SRINAGAR, 12 JAN

A BSF jawan died in a fire that broke out in a building inside a camp of the border guarding force in Bandipora district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Monday. The deceased jawan was identified as Constable Ramesh Kumar, who was working as a washerman, they said. According to the officials, the fire broke out in the single-storey tradesmen building at Modar in Bandipora on Sunday evening. The fire was brought under control by fire tenders and BSF jawans, the officials said. — *PTI*

INSV Kaundinya completes maiden voyage to Oman

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

The Indian Navy's sailing vessel, INSV Kaundinya, has successfully entered Omani waters after embarking on its maiden overseas journey from Porbandar, Gujarat. Onboard economist and Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council member Sanjeev Sanyal remarked, "We have demonstrated how ancient 'stitched' ships from India could cross the oceans." The vessel, based on a 5th-century CE design, aims to revive ancient maritime trade routes. Skippered by Commander Vikas Sheoran, the ship is expected to reach Muscat around 15 January 2025. Sanyal noted the project exhibits "the strengths and drawbacks" of this ancient shipbuilding method. — *ANI*

ISRO to take time to study PSLV-62 crash

SCIENTISTS EXAMINING DATA COLLECTED FROM ALL GROUND STATIONS

ISRO's PSLV-C62 carrying the EOS-N1 lifts off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh, Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

SRIHARIKOTA, 12 JAN

A former ISRO scientist said it would take some time for the ISRO to collect data, analyse, understand what happened, and make corrections. It is expected that ISRO will release the findings later, he told PTI, requesting anonymity.

Earlier, as the 22.5-hour countdown concluded on Monday morning, the 44.4 metre tall four-stage rocket lifted off as scheduled at 10.18 am from the spaceport here in Sriharikota.

The mission objective was to deploy a primary Earth Observation satellite and co-passenger satellites into a 512 km Sun-Synchronous Orbit, after a flight of about 17 minutes.

The automatic launch sequence commenced following approval from the mission director. ISRO scientists provided real-time updates as the vehicle ascended. The initial phases of the flight proceeded according to plan.

ISRO Chairman V Narayanan, right, briefs media on the anomaly at the end of PSLV-C62's third stage at Sriharikota on Monday *PHOTO: PTI*

However, after the announcement that the "third stage ignited," an uneasy calm descended at the Mission Control Centre.

In his address at the centre, ISRO Chairman Narayanan said: "The PSLV is a four-stage vehicle with two solid stages and two liquid stages. The performance of the vehicle up to the end of the third stage was as expected. Close to the end of the third stage, we saw disturbance in the vehicle, and subsequently, there was a deviation in the flight path."

Later, in a brief press conference, Narayanan, who is also the Secretary of the Department of Space, said, "As all of you are aware, today we attempted PSLV-C62/EOS-N1 mission... the mission could not proceed in the expected (flight) path. That is the information right now available."

"We are going through the data and with the data collected from all the ground stations, and once the data analysis is completed, we shall come back to you," he added.

When the PSLV-C61 mission failed last year, former ISRO Chairman S Somanath said he was aware of the challenges faced during the development of the third-stage solid motor, an endeavour marked by multiple failures. — *PTI*

SC seeks Centre's reply on ECs' immunity

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

The Supreme Court on Monday issued notices to the Centre and the Election Commission on a petition filed by Congress leader Jaya Thakur challenging a law that grants lifetime legal immunity to the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and other Election Commissioners.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said it would examine the validity of the provision, which shields the CEC and ECs from civil and criminal proceedings arising from decisions taken during elections, even after they demit office.

In her plea, Thakur argued that the Constitution does not extend such blanket protection even to judges, and Parliament cannot confer

immunity exceeding that available to other constitutional authorities.

She contended that the provision and undermines free and fair elections.

The immunity clause was introduced through the law passed in December 2023 governing the appointment, service conditions and tenure of Election Commissioners. Opposition parties had opposed the legislation, alleging it diluted earlier judicial safeguards.

In March 2023, the Supreme Court ruled that appointments to the Election Commission must be made by a panel comprising the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the CJI, until Parliament enacted a law.

The December 2023 legislation replaced the CJI with a Cabinet Minister, drawing criticism from the Opposition.

Thakur has alleged that the new law was enacted to overturn the March 2023 verdict and restore Central executive control over appointments to the ECI. — *Agencies*

Plea against Polavaram rejected

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

The Supreme Court disposed of Telangana government's writ petition against the Polavaram Multipurpose Irrigation Project in Andhra Pradesh, but allowed it to file a fresh lawsuit under Article 131 of the Constitution.

Article 131 grants the SC original jurisdiction to hear disputes between the Centre and states or between states themselves, particularly concerning legal rights, ensuring that a single authoritative body resolves these critical federal issues.

A bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi disposed of the Telangana government's writ petition on the ground that it was not maintainable. Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the Congress-led government, said their lawsuit will be filed shortly.

The bench pointed out that there are other stakeholders in the dispute like Maharashtra and Karnataka and the writ has not made them party. The SC was hearing a plea filed by the Telangana government against the Centre's assistance to AP to expand the Polavaram project.

The plea also challenged the environmental clearance given to the project and alleged that the DPR violated the Central Water Commission's (CWC's) recommendations. — *PTI*

Gurugram, Bathinda freeze; Rajasthan's Fatehpur coldest

CHANDIGARH, 12 JAN

Gurugram and Bathinda were gripped by freezing cold, with both places recordED night temperatures of 0.6 degrees Celsius, the IMD said on Monday. In both Gurugram and Bathinda, Sunday night was the coldest so far.

Most places in Punjab and Haryana, and Chandigarh have been swept by severe cold, with fog reducing visibility in many areas.

In Haryana, Narnaul was the coldest place with a minimum temperature of 1.2 degrees Celsius. Bhiwani recorded a low of 1.5 degrees Celsius, Hisar 2.6 degrees Celsius, Karnal 3.5 degrees Celsius, Ambala 4.5 degrees Celsius and Rohtak 3.2 degrees Celsius.

Intense chill persisted across Rajasthan over the past 24 hours as temperatures dipped sharply, officials said on Monday. Several districts recorded near-freezing night temperatures, disrupting daily life. Night temperatures remained below 8 degrees Celsius in many areas. Isolated pockets of the state experienced severe cold wave conditions during this period.

Fatehpur in Sikar district was the coldest place, recording a minimum temperature of minus 0.4 degrees Celsius. This was followed by Lunkaransar in Bikaner at 0.4 degrees and Churu at 1.3 degrees Celsius. — *PTI*

SC seeks Centre's stand on AYUSH docs' plea

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

The SC on Monday sought responses from the Union ministries of Law, Health and Ayush on a PIL seeking a direction to declare AYUSH doctors as "registered medical practitioners" like allopathic doctors.

A Bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi issued notice on the plea filed by law student Nitin Upadhyay, represented by advocate Ashwini Upadhyay. The court also sought responses on a prayer to constitute an expert committee to update the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954.

The plea seeks inclusion of AYUSH practitioners under Section 2(cc) of the 1954 Act, which defines "registered medical practitioner." It argues that Section 3(d) imposes a blanket ban on advertisements on diseases, without distinguishing between misleading claims and scientifically backed info. — *PTI*

SC rebukes judge for urinating on train

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

The Supreme Court on Monday stayed a Madhya Pradesh High Court order that quashed the termination of a judicial officer who allegedly created a nuisance and urinated in front of the berth of a woman co-passenger on a train in 2018.

Terming the civil judge's conduct as "disgusting," a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta observed that it was a "shocking" case and he should have been dismissed.

It issued a notice to the judicial officer and the Madhya Pradesh government seeking their responses on the petition filed by the high court's administrative side against a 2025 May order of the high court's division bench that had quashed the termination order of September 2019 and had directed that the judicial officer be reinstated within 15 days.

"He should have been dismissed," the apex court bench said. — *PTI*

'Chh'garh extortion funds used for polls'

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

The Enforcement Directorate said that a part of the Rs 540 crore "extortion" money generated from an alleged illegal coal levy scam in Chhattisgarh during Congress rule was used to fund election expenses and "bribe" politicians and bureaucrats.

The ED said in a statement on Monday that it has attached assets worth Rs 2.66 crore of Soumya Chaurasia, a suspended state administrative service officer who was deputy secretary in the Chhattisgarh CMO, and another person as part of a money laundering investigation.

A total of eight immovable properties, land parcels and residential flats, have been provisionally attached under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

These properties were "acquired" by the accused in the case, Chaurasia and Nikhil Chandrakar, in the names of their relatives from the coal levy and other acts of extortion. The value of the attached assets is Rs 2.66 crore.

The case pertains to charges that a group with the help of senior politicians and bureaucrats, "extorted" money from coal transporters at the rate of Rs 25 per tonne from July 2020 to June 2022. — *PTI*

Man held for threatening ED officers

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

An "imposter," who was allegedly threatening ED officials to prevent them from taking action in an investment "fraud" case involving around Rs 5,900 crore in Hyderabad, has been arrested by the ED under the anti-money laundering law.

The agency said Kalyan Banerjee was taken into custody on 10 January after his premises in Secunderabad were raided by it. He was produced before a PMLA court in Hyderabad on Sunday which sent him to ED custody till 23 January.

The case pertains to the ED investigation against Nowhera Shaik and others who collected around Rs 5,978 crore from the public with a promise of 36 per cent returns per annum. They, however, failed to return even the principal, the ED said.

Shaikh had hired Banerjee on remuneration and commission basis, the ED said. — *PTI*

Right to higher edu cannot be curtailed lightly: Delhi HC

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

The right to pursue higher education, even though not a fundamental right, cannot be curtailed lightly and there is an an affirmative obligation on the State to ensure it, the Delhi High Court said.

The observation was made by Justice Jasmeet Singh while dealing with a student whose admission to a medical college was cancelled over allegations of being involved in irregularities in NEET-UG 2024.

In view of the stand taken by the CBI, the court held that the petitioner was not an accused but was only a witness in the criminal case being probed by the agency in connection with the irregularities, and therefore there could not be any prima facie findings of him committing malpractice.

The court thus ruled that the "valuable right" accrued to the petitioner after he cleared NEET-UG needed to be protected and that the cancellation of his admission and removal of the name of the petitioner from the MBBS course disrupted his academic progress on "totally unjustifiable grounds."

"The petition is allowed and a mandamus is issued to the respondent to permit the petitioner to continue his MBBS course," it ordered. — *PTI*

SCRAPS FIAT LATER

EC calls ex-Navy chief to verify his ID

PANAJI, 12 JAN

The Election Commission of India issued a notice to former chief of naval staff Admiral Arun Prakash, asking him to attend a meeting to establish his identity as part of the Special Inten-sive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

Later, The Election Commission (EC) clarified that a "system-driven procedure" led to the issue of a notice to the former Navy chief. The EC said the incomplete details in his enumera-tion form triggered the notice.

EC officials said the form had now been completed and that the Prakash need not appear now before EC officials.

The notice to Admiral Prakash, an 81-year-old Vir

Former Navy chief Admiral Arun Prakash, a Vir Chakra awardee, addressing a press conference *PHOTO: ANI*

Chakra awardee and hero of the 1971 India-Pakistan War, had sparked a social media storm, with veterans and citizens ques-tioning why such a decorated officer was required to "prove his identity" in person.

Admiral Prakash, who settled in Goa after retirement, said SIR forms should be revised if they are not "seeking" the required information.

A senior official said his details do not figure in the voter list last updated in 2002 and that he falls under the "unmapped" category.

"This is what is happening in most such cases. Admiral Prakash falls in the unmapped category," South Goa District Collector and Returning Officer Egna Cleetus said.

Admiral Prakash wrote on X on Sunday, "May I point out to @ECIVEEP that (a) if the SIR forms are not evoking the reqd info they should be revised; (b) the BLO visited us 3 times & could have asked for additional info; (c) we are an 82/78 yr old couple & have been asked to appear on 2 different dates 18 km away!!" he said in another post. —*PTI*

UP interfaith marriage sparks right wing protest

SHAHJAHANPUR, 12 JAN

Hindu activists objected to the 'walima' (wedding reception) of a newly-married couple in the Kotwali police station area here, organising a protest that made the family cancel the event, a police officer said.

He said on Sunday night, Dr Adnan, a resident of Zia Khel locality in Shahjahanpur city, was holding his 'walima' at a local banquet lawn. He had married a Hindu woman named Neelam through a registered marriage in Delhi.

As information went around, a large number of Hindu activists reached the event venue and created a ruckus. A video of the incident has also surfaced.

Rajesh Awasthi, a Hindu leader who participated in the protest, said they had received information that Adnan had married a Hindu woman and his family was holding a 'walima' feast. Triggered by this, Hindu activists reached the venue and protested against the marriage.

A memorandum was submitted to Superintendent of Police Rajesh Dwivedi on Monday, demanding action against Adnan under the National Security Act, he added.

SP Rajesh Dwivedi said that Adnan Ansari, 29, a dentist, had married Neelam, 35, an MBA graduate working for a multinational, at a Delhi court on 12 September.

The SP said Adnan's family had printed invitation cards for the 'walima', in which the bride's name was given as Neelam Ansari. —*PTI*

Punjab govt seeks UK documents on Bhagat Singh's trial

CHANDIGARH, 12 JAN

The Punjab government has sought the United Kingdom's assistance in procuring films, tapes, and other archival documentation relating to Bhagat Singh's trial proceedings.

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann made the request in a letter dated 9 January to British Deputy High Commissioner Alba Smeriglio.

"It is learnt that original audio/video recordings and documentation pertaining to the trial of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Shaheed Sukhdev Thapar, and Shaheed Shivaram Hari Rajguru are held by authorities in Scotland, reportedly preserved in a museum maintaining historical legal archives of that era," Mann said in the letter to the Deputy High Commissioner. — *PTI*

HELL ON EARTH

A thick layer of toxic froth has resurfaced on the Yamuna River in Kalindi Kunj in New Delhi. The foam is a toxic concoction of industrial waste being released into the river, along with organic waste. Experts claim that the water is a lot more polluted now than it was during the Chhath pooja festival in October last year. Incidentally, Delhi Tourism Minister Kapil Mishra announced an international-standard 40-seater luxury cruise on the Yamuna as part of its riverfront tourism plan

PHOTO: PTI

India bears 2nd-highest diabetic economic burden

PHOTO: FREEPIK

India faces the second highest economic burden due to diabetes of USD 11.4 trillion -- the United States bears the highest costs at USD 16.5 trillion, and China the third at USD 11 trillion, a new study has estimated.

Researchers, including those from the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis and the Vienna University of Economics and Business in Austria, calculated the economic impact of diabetes across 204 countries from 2020 to 2050.

Global costs amount to around USD 10 trillion, excluding informal care provided by family members -- about 0.2 per cent of the world's annual gross domestic product (GDP), findings published in the journal Nature Medicine show.

Factoring in informal care amounts to up to USD 152 trillion, or 1.7 per cent of the world's yearly GDP, the study estimates.

"Caregivers often drop out of the labour market, at least partially, which creates additional economic costs," author Klaus Prettner, professor of macroeconomics and digitalisation at the Vienna University of Economics and Business, said.

- Global costs amount to around USD 10 trillion, excluding informal care provided by family members -- about 0.2 per cent of the world's annual GDP, findings published in the journal Nature Medicine show.

The high share of informal caregiving, making up almost 90 per cent of the total economic burden, is explained by the fact that prevalence exceeds mortality by a factor of 30-50, the researchers said.

"The United States faces the largest economic burden of diabetes mellitus at INT$ 2.5 trillion, followed by India at INT$ 1.6 trillion and China at INT$ 1.0 trillion. When considering informal care loss, the largest economic burdens are INT$ 16.5 trillion in the United States, INT$ 11.4 trillion in India and INT$ 11.0 trillion in China," the authors wrote.

An international dollar (INT$) is a hypothetical, statistical unit used to compare economic metrics across countries. It has the same purchasing power as a United States dollar (USD).

For India and China, the high economic costs of diabetes were mainly attributed to a large affected population, while those in the US were primarily due to high treatment costs and physical capital diversion, the researchers said.

They added that a prime distinction between high- and low-income countries is the distribution of the burden across the treatment cost and lost labour channels -- the former makes up 41 per cent of the economic burden for high-income countries as opposed to 14 per cent for low-income countries.

"This is a stark illustration of how medical treatment regimes for chronic diseases such as diabetes are accessible to high income countries only," co-author Michael Kuhn, acting economic frontiers research group leader at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, said.

The economic impact of diabetes is enormous, compared to that due to Alzheimer's disease or cancer, the researchers said.

Promoting healthier lifestyles -- regular physical activity and a balanced diet -- is the most effective way to prevent diabetes and reduce its economic impact, they said.

Early detection through comprehensive diabetes screening programs for the entire population, along with rapid diagnosis and timely treatment, are essential steps toward mitigating both health and economic consequences, the team said.

Over a quarter of the world's diabetics are estimated to be living in India, according to a study published in The Lancet journal in November 2024. *—PTI*

SALAR سالار

All eyes on prediction mkt after $400K Maduro bet

Prediction markets let people wager on anything from a basketball game to the outcome of a presidential election — and recently, the downfall of former Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

The latter is drawing renewed scrutiny into this murky world of speculative, 24/7 transactions. Last week, an anonymous trader pocketed more than $400,000 after betting that Maduro would soon be out of office.

The bulk of the trader's bids on the platform Polymarket were made mere hours before US President Donald Trump announced the surprise nighttime raid that led to Maduro's capture, fuelling online suspicions of potential insider trading because of the timing of the wagers and the trader's narrow activity on the platform.

Others argued that the risk of getting caught was too big, and that previous speculation about Maduro's future could have led to such transactions.

Polymarket did not respond to requests for comment.

The commercial use of prediction markets has skyrocketed in recent years, opening the door for people to wage their money on the likelihood of a growing list of future events. But despite some eye-catching windfalls, traders still lose money every day.

And in terms of government oversight in the US, the trades are categorised differently than traditional forms of gambling — raising questions about transparency and risk.

The scope of topics involved in prediction markets can range immensely — from escalation in geopolitical conflicts, to pop culture moments and even the fate of conspiracy theories.

Recently, there's been a surge in wages for elections and sports games. But some users have also bet millions on things like a rumoured — and ultimately unrealised — "secret finale" for Netflix's 'Stranger Things,' whether the US government will confirm the existence of extraterrestrial life and how much billionaire Elon Musk might post on social media this month.

In industry-speak, what someone buys or sells in a prediction market is called an "event contract." They're typically advertised as "yes" or "no" wagers. And the price of one fluctuates between $0 and $1, reflecting what traders are collectively willing to pay based on a 0 per cent to 100 per cent chance of whether they think an event will occur.

The more likely traders think an event will occur, the more expensive that contract will become.

Proponents of prediction markets argue putting money on the line leads to better forecasts.

Still, it's never a "crystal ball," he noted, and prediction markets can be wrong, too.

Who is behind all of the trading is also pretty murky. While the companies running the platforms collect personal information of their users in order to verify identities and payments, most people can trade under anonymous pseudonyms online — making it difficult for the public to know who is profiting off many event contracts. In theory, people investing their money may be closely following certain events, but others could just be randomly guessing.

Polymarket is one of the largest prediction markets in the world, where its users can fund event contracts through cryptocurrency, debit or credit cards and bank transfers.

Former president Joe Biden was aggressive in cracking down on prediction markets and following a 2022 settlement with the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, Polymarket was barred from operating in the country.

That changed under Trump late last year, when Polymarket announced it would be returning to the US after receiving clearance from the commission. American-based users can now join a platform "waitlist".

Meanwhile, Polymarket's top competitor, Kalshi, has been a federally-regulated exchange since 2020. The platform offers similar ways to buy and sell event contracts as Polymarket — and it currently allows event contracts on elections and sports nationwide.

The space is now crowded with other big names.

A growing number of states and tribes are suing to stop this.

Federal law bars event contracts related to gaming as well as war, terrorism and assassinations, Roth said, which could put some prediction market trades on shaky ground, at least in the US. But users might still find ways to buy certain contracts while travelling abroad or connecting to different VPNs.

Whether the CFTC will take any of that on has yet to be seen. But the agency, which did not respond to a request for comment, has already taken steps away from enforcement.

Despite overseeing trillions of dollars for the overall US derivatives market, the CFTC is also much smaller than the Securities and Exchange Commission.

And at the same time, event contracts are growing rapidly on prediction market platforms, there have been additional cuts to the CFTC's workforce and a wave of leadership departures under Trump's second term.

On Friday, Democratic Rep Ritchie Torres introduced a bill aimed at curbing government employees' involvement in politically related event contracts. *—PTI*

Polymarket is one of the largest prediction markets in the world, where its users can fund event contracts through cryptocurrency, debit or credit cards and bank transfers ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

UN court opens landmark Myanmar Rohingya genocide case

During the hearing of Myanmar's Rohingya minority genocide, Gambia's Justice Minister Dawda Jallow on Monday told the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that the Myanmar military intentionally targeted the community in an attempt to destroy it, sources said.

"It is not about esoteric issues of international law. It is about real people, real stories and a real group of human beings. The Rohingya of Myanmar. They have been targeted for destruction," Jallow told ICJ judges.

The West African country of Gambia first filed the case at the International Court of Justice in 2019, arguing a so-called "clearance operation" by Myanmar's military in 2017 violated the 1948 Genocide Convention.

Myanmar is facing accusations that it is responsible for genocide against the Rohingya ethnic minority at the top court of the United Nations.

Myanmar, which has since been taken over by the military, has denied the allegations. Without the ICJ, the military "will be accountable to no one and there will be no constraints on their persecution and ultimate destruction of the Rohingya," lawyer Paul S. Reichler argued on behalf of Gambia during a preliminary hearing in 2022.

Myanmar is currently facing accusations that it is responsible for genocide against the Rohingya ethnic minority at the top court of the United Nations ***PHOTO: UN***

The Southeast Asian country launched the campaign in Rakhine state in 2017 after an attack by a Rohingya insurgent group. Security forces were accused of mass rapes, killings and torching thousands of homes as more than 700,000 Rohingya fled into neighbouring Bangladesh.

Now, some 1.2 million members of this persecuted minority are languishing in chaotic, overcrowded camps, where armed groups recruit children and girls as young as 12 are forced into prostitution. The sudden and severe foreign aid cuts imposed last year by US President Donald Trump shuttered thousands of the camps' schools and have caused children to starve to death.

"Myanmar's case before the ICJ is a beacon of hope for hundreds of thousands of people like myself that our plight for justice will not go unheard," Lucky Karim of Refugee Women for Peace and Justice, an organisation that advocates for justice for the Rohingya, said in a statement.

Myanmar was initially represented at the court by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, who denied that her country's armed forces committed genocide, telling the ICJ in 2019 that the mass exodus of Rohingya people from the country she led was the unfortunate result of a battle with insurgents.

The pro-democracy icon is now in prison after being convicted of what her supporters call trumped-up charges after a military takeover of power.

Myanmar contested the court's jurisdiction, saying Gambia was not directly involved in the conflict and therefore could not initiate a case.

Both countries are signatories to the genocide convention, signed in the wake of World War II, and in 2022, judges rejected the argument, allowing the case to move forward.

The decision opened the door for South Africa to bring a case accusing Israel of genocide. Israel strongly denies the allegation and accuses Pretoria of providing political cover for the Palestinian militant group Hamas.

Whatever the court ultimately decides in the Myanmar case will impact the South African case, Juliette McIntyre, an expert on international law at the University of South Australia, told The Associated Press.

"The legal test for genocide is very strict, but it is possible the judges broaden the definition," she said. Despite the length of the proceedings, McIntyre said they are still important for the victims.

"It validates their experiences and can provide support for other legal actions."

A finding of genocide would bolster the ongoing investigation and another court based in The Hague, the International Criminal Court. In 2024, the court's chief prosecutor asked judges to issue an arrest warrant for the head of Myanmar's military regime, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, for crimes against the Rohingya. That request is still pending. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Truck drives through anti-Iran rally in LA

LOS ANGELES, 12 JAN

Los Angeles police responded Sunday after somebody drove a U-Haul box truck down a street crowded with marchers demonstrating in support of the Iranian people, causing protesters to scramble out of the way and then run after the speeding vehicle to try to attack the driver.

The U-Haul truck, with a window and side mirrors shattered, was stopped several blocks away and surrounded by police cars. ABC7 news helicopter footage showed officers keeping the crowd at bay as demonstrators swarmed the truck, throwing punches at the driver and thrusting flagpoles through the driver's side window. The driver, a man who was not identified, was detained "pending further investigation," police said in a statement Sunday evening. *—PTI*

Argentina wildfires burn through 12,000 ha of forest

MONTEVIDEO, 12 JAN

Wildfires in the Argentine Patagonia have blazed through nearly 12,000 hectares of scrubland, planted and native forests. The fires started almost a week ago in the Andean region of the Argentine province of Chubut and are putting a power plant and a school at risk as well as affecting rural properties, the authorities said on Sunday. The causes of the fires have not yet been established, but Chubut Gov Ignacio Torres told journalists on Thursday there are indications that one of the biggest active fires was deliberately set. "The wretches who started the fire are going to end up in jail," Torres said, while announcing a reward of 50 million pesos (approximately $34,000) for anyone who provides information about the incident. *—PTI*

Human heads found hanging in Ecuador beach

QUITO, 12 JAN

Five human heads were found hanging from ropes on a beach in southwest Ecuador, as the country reels from a wave of drug trafficking violence. Images published by Ecuadorian media showed the bloody scene. Next to the heads was a warning sign directed at alleged extortionists of fishermen in the small fishing port of Puerto Lopez. A police report attributed the incident to a conflict between criminal groups. A dispute for territory and control of drug-trafficking routes has triggered violent episodes across the Manabi province, where Puerto Lopez is located. Police on Saturday said that they had carried out control and surveillance operations in Puerto Lopez. *—PTI*

Trump hints at negotiations with Iran

Iran offered no response to Trump amid death toll climbing to 572

DUBAI, 12 JAN

US President Donald Trump said Iran wants to negotiate with Washington after he threatened military action over Tehran's violent crackdown on nationwide protests, as activists said the death toll has risen to at least 572.

Iran offered no direct response to Trump's remarks, which followed a weekend visit to Tehran by Oman's foreign minister, a long-time intermediary between the two rivals. Any talks remain uncertain, with Trump demanding limits on Iran's nuclear programme and ballistic missiles — conditions Tehran says undermine its national defence.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi insisted the situation was "under total control", blaming Israel and the United States for the unrest without providing evidence. Speaking to foreign diplomats, he said the demonstrations were provoked to justify US intervention. Despite this, Araghchi said Iran was "open to diplomacy". Foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei added that channels with Washington remained open, but rejected talks based on "dictation".

On Monday, tens of thousands joined pro-government rallies across Iran in a show of force backing the theocracy, following days of protests challenging Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. State television broadcast chants of "Death to America" and "Death to Israel". Iran's attorney general has warned protesters could face charges carrying the death penalty.

Trump said his administration was weighing options including cyberattacks and direct US or Israeli strikes. He said a meeting was being arranged but warned action could come first.

Iran's parliamentary speaker cautioned that US or Israeli forces would be "legitimate targets" if force is used. The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency said more than 10,600 people have been detained, with 496 protesters and 48 security personnel among the dead. Iran has not released official figures.

An internet blackout has hampered independent verification and heightened fears of a harsher crackdown.

The protests erupted on 28 December over economic collapse and a plunging currency, before expanding into a broader challenge to Iran's ruling system. Reza Pahalavi, exiled Iranian Crown Prince, said global assistance for Iran is coming soon. *—PTI*

IRAN BLAMES MOSSAD AS BIBI MONITORS PROTESTS

Iran's Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi blamed "Mossad terrorists" for the deadly unrest in the country over the past 15 days. Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel is "closely monitoring" developments and voiced strong support for Iranians protesting against "tyranny." He condemned the killing of civilians, praised protesters' courage, and expressed hope that Iran would be liberated soon. Netanyahu added that Israel and Iran could one day restore ties, building a future of peace and prosperity.

Trump calls himself 'Acting Prez of Venezuela'

NEW YORK, 12 JAN

United States President Donald Trump described himself as the "Acting President of Venezuela" in a Truth Social post on Sunday, posting an image that listed his title as "Incumbent January 2026".

The post also has his designation as the 45th and 47th President of the United States, who assumed office on 20 January 2025.

The social media post, shared on Trump's platform, included his official portrait and the designation "Acting President of Venezuela," a move that has drawn global attention and raised questions about Washington's role in the oil-rich country amid escalating political developments.

Trump's remark comes in the wake of what the US described as a "large-scale (military) strike" against Venezuela earlier this month, during which Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, along with his wife Cilia Flores, were captured and flown to New York to face narco-terrorism conspiracy indictments.

POPE MEETS MACHADO

Leo XIV met with Venezuelan opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner María Corina Machado in a private audience at the Vatican on Monday.

The meeting, which hadn't been previously included in the list of Leo's planned appointments, was later listed by the Vatican in its daily bulletin, without adding details. *—PTI*

Smithsonian redacts Trump's impeachment

References to President Trump's impeachments have been removed from his portrait at the Smithsonian. In August, Trump ordered museum officials to review all exhibits ahead of the nation's 2026 Independence Day. His original label said he was "impeached twice" and made a historic 2024 comeback, becoming the second US president to win a non-consecutive second term. This is the latest in a series of museum alterations, reflecting Trump's efforts to shape US history. -PTI

Trump and Exxon: When business meets politics

Exxon Mobil's ties to Trump span business and politics. Founded in 1870 by John D Rockefeller, Exxon is valued at USD 525.5 billion. The oil major donated USD 0.5 million in 2017 and USD 1 million in 2025 to Trump's campaigns. The oil sector gave USD 23 million to his 2024 campaign. Ex- Exxon CEO Rex Tillerson served as Trump's first Secretary of State. In April 2024, Trump reportedly urged oil firms to raise USD 1 billion. Now CEO Darren Woods has a rocky relationship with Trump. -PTI

Rs 37,000 crore Venezuelan oil is en route to US

President Donald Trump said USD 4.2 billion (Rs 37,000 crore) worth of Venezuelan oil is currently en route to the United States after talks with interim President Delcy Rodriguez. Speaking aboard Air Force One, Trump said he agreed to take 50 million barrels of oil, calling bilateral ties "very good". - ANI

Trump threatens to block ExxonMobil from Venezuela

NEW YORK, 12 JAN

US President Donald Trump said he was "inclined" to keep ExxonMobil out of Venezuela after the oil major's chief executive described the country as "uninvestable", signalling a tough stance on who gains access to its vast oil reserves.

Trump made the remarks after chairing a White House meeting on Friday with oil and gas executives to discuss Venezuela's energy sector following the ouster of former president Nicolás Maduro. Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One while travelling from Florida to Washington DC, Trump said, "No, I didn't like Exxon's response… I'd probably be inclined to keep Exxon out."

At the meeting, ExxonMobil CEO Darren Woods said Venezuela's current legal and commercial framework made investment impossible. "If we look at the legal and commercial constructs and frameworks in place today in Venezuela, it's uninvestable," Woods said, calling for durable investment protections, reforms to the legal system and changes to hydrocarbon laws.

Woods, however, said he was confident that with the Trump administration working with Venezuelan authorities, such changes could be implemented. He added that Exxon had not operated in Venezuela for nearly 20 years and was ready to deploy a technical team, with security guarantees, to assess assets and resuscitate production. *—PTI*

UK to develop new missiles for Ukraine

LONDON/KYIV, 12 JAN

The UK will develop new tactical ballistic missiles for Ukraine under an initiative code-named Project Nightfall, the Ministry of Defence announced on Monday, as Western allies step up military support amid intensifying Russian attacks.

Defence Secretary John Healey said the missiles would carry a conventional 200kg warhead and have a range of up to 500km, enabling Ukrainian forces to strike targets deep inside Russian territory. He said Britain was determined to equip Ukraine with advanced weapons to counter President Vladimir Putin's invasion.

Healey cited Russia's recent hypersonic missile strike on western Ukraine as evidence of Moscow's willingness to act "with impunity", targeting civilian areas using sophisticated weaponry. He was in Kyiv when the strike occurred and said he heard air raid sirens during the attack.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russia has been losing at least 1,000 soldiers killed every day since December, calling the scale of casualties "madness". He urged the US, Europe and other partners to unite to stop Russia, warning that continued attacks show the world's failure to restrain aggressive regimes. *—PTI*

UK has launched Project Nightfall
PHOTO: LOCKHEED MARTIN

US Fed Chair Powell under criminal investigation

WASHINGTON, 12 JAN

The US Department of Justice (DOJ) intensified its standoff with the Federal Reserve, serving subpoenas to the central bank and threatening its Chair, Jerome Powell, with criminal charges. The case centers on Powell's June testimony regarding a USD 2.5 billion renovation of office buildings, which President Trump called "wasteful."

The Fed is independent, but Trump has repeatedly criticized it for not cutting interest rates to his liking. Powell says the threat of criminal charges is a "pretext" to undermine the Fed's independence by using political pressure or intimidation.

On Sunday the DOJ said that it can not comment on any particular case, but added that Attorney General Pam Bondi "has instructed her US Attorneys to prioritize investigating any abuse of tax payer dollars". *—PTI*

Trump mocks Greenland, says its defence is 'two dog sleds'

WASHINGTON, 12 JAN

United States President Donald Trump has again reiterated that controlling Greenland is crucial for US national security, citing increased Russian and Chinese military activity in the Arctic. He added, "You know what their (Greenland's) defence is? Two dog sleds," while Russia and China have "destroyers and submarines all over the place."

Aboard Air Force One on Sunday, Trump told reporters, "If we don't take Greenland, (then) Russia or China will." Denmark's prime minister warned that any US attempt to seize Greenland would undermine transatlantic security (NATO). Trump dismissed the warning, saying, "If it affects NATO, it affects NATO. But you know, Greenland needs us much more than we need them."

The UK shares concerns over Russia and China's growing Arctic influence and is discussing Arctic security with NATO allies. to prevent Russia or China from taking it over. The island, with around 57,000 people, is defended by Denmark, whose military is small compared with the US, which maintains a base there.

Trump reiterated his preference for a purchase agreement but warned he would take "the hard way" if necessary. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said on 6 January that the administration is considering a "range of options," including possible military action. *—Agencies*

On Sunday, Trump referred to Greenland's defence as 'dog sleds' against Russia and China's 'destroyers and submarines' ***PHOTO: X***

AND THE AWARD GOES TO ...

'Hamnet' takes the top honour at Golden Globes

LOS ANGELES, 12 JAN

Shakespearean drama 'Hamnet' stunned at the 83rd Golden Globe Awards. The win followed Jessie Buckley's Best Actress (Drama) for the film adapted by Chloé Zhao on William and Agnes Shakespeare.

Paul Thomas Anderson became the second filmaker to sweep director, screenplay and film producer for 'One Battle After Another'.

Production studio, Warner Bros, was ensured a strong night the studio behind both 'One Battle After Another' and 'Sinners', even as the industry faces uncertainty following news of a proposed USD 83 billion Netflix deal. Netflix drama Adolescence too was a big hit with 14-year-old Owen Cooper winning Best Supporting Actor. The Globes largely steered clear of politics, with Trump's name notably absent.

However, Host Nikki Glaser took a jab at the Epstein files without saying Jeffrey Epstein's name."So many A-listers, and by A-listers I do mean people who were on a list that was heavily redacted," she said.

PRIYANKA CHOPRA TURNS HEADS

Priyanka Chopra Jonas turned heads as she presented the award for Best Performance by a Male Actor in a Television Series – Drama to Noah Wayle alongside global pop star Lisa.

CELEBS PROTEST ICE

Stars including Mark Ruffalo, Jean Smart, Wanda Sykes and Natasha Lyonne wore "BE GOOD" and "ICE OUT"' pins, protesting ICE-shootings and honouring Renee Good, who was killed in Minneapolis. *—PTI*

Best Actor (Drama): Wagner Moura — 'The Secret Agent'
Best Supporting Actor (TV): Owen Cooper — 'Adolescence'
Best Actress (Musical or Comedy): Rose Byrne — 'If I Had Legs, I'd Kick You'

THE WINNERS ARE...

- Best Motion Picture (Drama): **'HAMNET'**
- Best Supporting Actor (Drama): **STELLAN SKARSGÅRD — 'SENTIMENTAL VALUE'**
- Best Non-English Language Film: **'THE SECRET AGENT' (BRAZIL)**
- Best Animated Film: **'KPOP DEMON HUNTERS'**
- Cinematic & Box Office Achievement: **'SINNERS'**
- Best TV Series (Musical or Comedy): **'THE STUDIO'**
- Best Actor (TV Drama): **NOAH WYLE — 'THE PITT'**
- Best Actress (TV Drama): **RHEA SEEHORN — 'PLURIBUS'**
- Best Actress (TV Comedy): **JEAN SMART — 'HACKS'**
- Best Actor (TV Comedy): **SETH ROGEN — 'THE STUDIO'**
- Best Limited / Anthology Series: **'ADOLESCENCE'**
- Best Actor (Limited Series): **STEPHEN GRAHAM — 'ADOLESCENCE'**
- Best Supporting Actor (TV): **OWEN COOPER — 'ADOLESCENCE'**
- Best Original Song: **'GOLDEN' — 'KPOP DEMON HUNTERS'**
- Best Original Score: **LUDWIG GÖRANSSON — 'SINNERS'**

Retail inflation rises to 3-month high of 1.33% in December

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

- The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based headline inflation was 0.71 per cent in November and 5.22 per cent in December 2024. The inflation stood at 1.44 per cent in September.

Retail inflation rose to a three-month high of 1.33 per cent in December, mainly due to higher prices of food items, but remained below the Reserve Bank of India's lower tolerance level.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based headline inflation was 0.71 per cent in November and 5.22 per cent in December 2024. The inflation stood at 1.44 per cent in September.

The food inflation in December was (-) 2.71 per cent, and remained negative for the seventh consecutive month.

"The increase in headline inflation and food inflation during the month of December 2025 is mainly attribut-ed to an increase in inflation of personal care and effects, vegetables, meat and fish, egg, spices and pulses and products," the National Statistics Office (NSO) said while releasing the CPI data.

The headline inflation in urban areas was higher at 2.03 per cent compared to 0.76 per cent in rural India.

The retail inflation remained below the Reserve Bank of India's lower tolerance limit for the fourth consecu-tive month in December.

The government has mandated the central bank to ensure inflation remains at 4 per cent, with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

According to the NSO data, the top five major states with high inflation during December were Kerala (9.49 per cent), Karnataka (2.99 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (2.71 per cent), Tamil Nadu (2.67 per cent), and Jammu and Kashmir (2.26 per cent).

On the other hand, retail inflation was negative in Assam, Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh. *—PTI*

The food inflation in December was (-) 2.71 per cent and remained negative for the seventh consecutive month **PHOTO: X**

PHOTO: PTI

Rupee settles 2 paise higher at 90.16 against USD

MUMBAI, 12 JAN

The rupee recovered from low levels and settled 2 paise higher at 90.16 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday on weak American currency and sliding crude oil prices. Equity market sentiment also improved after the new US envoy to India, Sergio Gor, said that both sides are actively engaged in firming up a trade deal, forex analysts said. However, a volatile geopolitical situation kept the domestic currency under pressure, restricting its recovery, they said.. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.23 and strengthened to 90.13 during intra-day. It touched a low of 90.25 before ending the session at 90.16 (provisional) against the greenback, registering a gain of 2 paise from its previous closing level. *—PTI*

Websol to invest Rs 3,538 cr in Andhra solar plant

AMRAVATI, 12 JAN

Websol Renewable Private Limited will invest Rs 3,538 crore to set up an 8 gigawatt integrated solar manufacturing facility in Andhra Pradesh. The Andhra Pradesh government has approved the greenfield project at MPSEZ-Naidupeta in Tirupati district, comprising 4 GW of solar cell capacity and 4 GW of solar module capacity. The project will generate employment for around 2,000 people. The approval includes incentives such as land allotment, capital subsidy and power tariff reimbursement under the state's industrial policy, aimed at accelerating project execution, according to the order. As part of the expansion, Websol will set up a 100 MW captive solar power plant to lower operating costs and ensure energy security for the facility. *—PTI*

Maruti gets nod for Rs 4,960 cr Gujarat expansion

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

Car market leader Maruti Suzuki India has initiated a plan to expand its manufacturing capacity in Gujarat for Rs 4,960 Cr. This follows a meeting of Maruti Suzuki India board on Monday granting approval to acquire land for the expansion of production capacity at Khoraj Industrial Estate from Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation, and "the proposed capacity addition is up to 1 million (10 lakh) units", Maruti Suzuki India said in a regulatory filing. On the overall investment, the company said it would be finalised and approved by the board while framing the phases of installation of capacity. The mode of financing would be a combination of internal accruals and external borrowings, the company said. *—PTI*

IHCL gets first sound trademark for 'Taj' brand

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

Tata Group-owned Indian Hotels Company (IHCL) on Monday said it has secured trademark registration for the 'Taj' sonic sound, the first sound mark registration for a brand in the country's hospitality sector. The registration legally protects the marquee brand Taj's distinctive sonic identity as a trademark, recognising sound as a core brand asset, India's largest hospitality firm, IHCL, stated. In an increasingly experience-driven marketplace, sonic branding plays a powerful role in shaping emotional memory and deepening consumer recall beyond visual cues. As hospitality brands expand into immersive, multi-sensory experiences, sound has emerged as a critical touchpoint for building trust, familiarity, and emotional resonance among customers. *—PTI*

According to traders, escalating geo-political tensions and unrelenting foreign fuind outflows greatly hampered the sharp gains **PHOTO: PTI**

Market benchmarks snap 5-day losing run

Sensex surges by 302 pts, Nifty by 107 pts

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty found firmer ground on Monday after facing a massive drubbing in the past five trading sessions, propelled by bargain hunting in energy, banking and metal stocks amid renewed optimism surrounding a potential India-US trade deal.

However, escalating geopolitical tensions and unrelenting foreign fund outflows capped the sharp gains, traders said.

In volatile trading, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 301.93 points, or 0.36 per cent, to settle at 83,878.17. During the morning trade, it tumbled 715.17 points, or 0.85 per cent, to 82,861.07, breaching the 83,000 level.

The 50-share NSE Nifty edged higher by 106.95 points, or 0.42 per cent, to 25,790.25. The benchmark tanked 209.9 points, or 0.81 per cent, to 25,473.40 in morning trade.

The session began on a cautious note, but sentiment improved sharply in the latter half of the day after optimistic remarks from US Ambassador Sergio Gor, as the market staged a strong recovery.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Tata Steel, Asian Paints, Trent, State Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever, UltraTech Cement, ICICI Bank and Bharti Airtel were among the gainers.

On the other hand, Infosys, Bajaj Finance, Bharat Electronics, Larsen & Toubro and HDFC Bank were the laggards.

The BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.68 per cent, and the midcap index dipped 0.41 per cent.

Additionally, the stock markets will remain closed on Thursday, 15 January, on account of the Maharashtra civic polls, according to BSE and NSE.

Trading in the equity segment, derivatives, commodity and electronic gold receipts would remain closed.

Exchanges have around 15 trading holidays in a year, apart from weekly closures on Saturdays and Sundays *—PTI*

'World weaponising critical tech'

AHMEDABAD/ GANDHINAGAR, 12 JAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday warned that dependence on critical technologies and machinery is increasingly being weaponised, stressing that it is a "shared responsibility" of India and Germany to build trusted and resilient global supply chains.

Addressing the India–Germany CEOs Forum at the Mahatma Mandir Convention Centre in Gandhinagar, Modi said the partnership between the two countries is "seamless", rooted in shared values and mutual trust. The event was attended by visiting German Chancellor Friedrich Merz.

Highlighting economic ties, Modi noted that Germany is India's largest trading partner within the European Union, accounting for nearly one-fourth of India's total trade with the bloc, underscoring its position as India's leading EU partner.

Separately, India and Germany signed a bilateral pact to deepen cooperation in postal, express and logistics services, with a strong focus on cross-border e-commerce and time-definite international deliveries. The collaboration aims to boost export volumes, improve service quality and enhance the participation of Indian businesses in global value chains by strengthening access to international markets and India's logistics ecosystem. Under the pact, the two sides plan to launch joint premium international express products, including time-definite express services. These will combine India Post's extensive last-mile reach with the global express and logistics network of the Deutsche Post–DHL Group, significantly improving transit times, reliability and end-to-end shipment visibility. *—PTI*

PM Narendra Modi and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz pay tributes at Mahatma Gandhi's statue at Sabarmati Ashram **PHOTO: PTI**

Banks to close for 5 days in different states

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

Banks will remain closed in West Bengal on January 12 to mark the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekanan-da. They will remain closed in Gujarat, Assam, Odisha and Arunachal Pradesh on Makar Sankranti and Magh Bihu on 14 January.

Banks will remain closed in Karnataka, Sikkim, Telangana, and Maharashtra on Uttarayana Punyakala, Pongal and municipal elections on 15 January.

Banks will remain closed in Tamil Nadu on 15, 16 and 17 January for Pongal, Thiruvalluvar Day/Kanuma and Uzhavar Thirunal. In Andhra Pradesh banks will remain closed for Makar Sankranti and Thiruvalluvar Day/ Kanuma on 15 and 16 January.

However, people can access digital services, including ATMs, UPI payments and online bank-ing platforms on these days. *—Agencies*

SILVER, GOLD HIT LIFETIME HIGH

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

Silver prices rallied sharply by Rs 15,000 to hit a lifetime high of Rs 2,65,000 per kg in the national capital on Monday, and gold advanced to a fresh record of Rs 1,44,600 per 10 grams, mirroring strong gains in the global markets.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, silver soared by Rs 15,000, or 6 per cent, to touch a new peak of Rs 2,65,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) from the previous close of Rs 2,50,000 per kg.

In addition, gold of 99.9 per cent purity appreciated by Rs 2,900, or 2.05 per cent, to hit a lifetime high of Rs 1,44,600 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). It had ended at Rs 1,41,700 per 10 grams on Friday.

In the international market, spot gold surged past the USD 4,600 per ounce level for the first time. The yellow metal gained USD 90.72, or 2 per cent, to touch a record USD 4,601.69 per ounce.

PHOTO: PTI

"Gold has responded positively, and jumped to the USD 4,600 per ounce level, while silver has seen an even sharper surge to USD 84 per ounce, highlighting its higher beta in risk-sensitive environments," Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

Spot silver in the international trade rose by USD 4.3, or nearly 6 per cent, to touch a record high of USD 84.61 per ounce. *—PTI*

TCS Q3 profit drops 14% to Rs 10,657

MUMBAI, 12 JAN

The country's largest IT services company TCS on Monday reported 13.91 per cent decline in December quarter net profit at Rs 10,657 crore.

The Tata Group company had posted a net profit of Rs 12,380 crore in the October-December period of FY25 and Rs 12,075 crore in the preceding September quarter.

Revenue from operations in the quarter under review increased 4.86 per cent to Rs 67,087 crore from Rs 63,973 crore.

The operating profit margin in Q3 was stable at 25.2 per cent when compared with September quarter but higher than 24.5 per cent in the year-ago period, as per a company statement.

Company's chief executive and managing director K Krithivasan said the growth momentum witnessed in September quarter continued into the next three months as well. *—PTI*

Shadowfax IPO targets Rs 7,400cr value

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

Logistics services provider Shadowfax is set to launch its Rs 1,900-crore initial public offering (IPO) next week, targeting a valuation of Rs 7,400 crore, people familiar with the matter said on Monday.

Shadowfax is targeting a post-market valuation of about Rs 7,400 crore, lower than previous estimates of Rs 8,500 crore, in what is being positioned as a more conservative pricing approach aimed at attracting long-term institutional investors.

The IPO will comprise fresh issue of shares worth Rs 1,000 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of Rs 900 crore by existing shareholders.

As a part of the OFS, several companies -- would offload shares.

The company proposes to utilise proceeds from the fresh issue towards funding enhancing capacity in terms of network infrastructure, funding of lease payments for new first mile, last mile, and sort centres, as well as towards branding, marketing, and communication initiatives, unidentified inorganic acquisitions, and general corporate purposes. The latest move follows approval of the company's updated draft red herring prospectus. *—PTI*

Hyderabad delivery boy killed in accident was not staff: Zepto

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

Quick commerce firm Zepto on Monday said the delivery boy who died in a tragic accident in Hyderabad was neither associated with the company nor delivering an order for it at the time of the incident.

CCTV footage that went viral on social media captured a fatal accident in Hyderabad around 5 pm on January 5, showing a delivery worker falling from his bike and being run over by a bus, resulting in his instant death. The accident again triggered demand for action against fast delivery by quick commerce firms.

In a condolence message posted on the social media platform X, Zepto expressed sympathy for the bereaved family and clarified that the victim was not associated with the company. *—ANI*

AMID NEW STAR RATINGS

Air conditioner prices to rise 7-8% this season: Report

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

Consumers planning to purchase room air conditioners (RACs) may have to prepare for higher prices from this year, as the industry is expected to implement price hikes of 7-8 per cent on new models starting January 2026, according to a report by Equirus.

The report stated that the upcoming price increase will be driven by the implementation of the new star-rating regime, effective from January 2026, and by persistent commodity inflation.

It noted that industry-wide price hikes of 7-8 per cent are expected on new RAC models, with another round of price increases likely during April-May. This is expected to reset industry pricing levels and support margin normalisation through calendar year 2026.

PHOTO: ANI

It stated "With the new star-rating regime effective from Jan 2026 and commodity inflation persisting, industry-wide price hikes of 7-8 per cent are expected on new models"

From a consumer perspective, this means new air conditioner models launched next year are likely to cost more.

The report added that channel feedback already indicates strong pre-buying activity in December, as dealers and buyers stock up on existing models ahead of the new norms and anticipated price hikes.

The report highlighted that the Indian RAC industry experienced significant volatility over the past two years.

Factors such as adverse weather conditions, GST transition-related disruptions, elevated channel inventory, and aggressive customer support schemes led to demand volatility and pressured industry profitability for most of the year. *—ANI*

MALAYSIA, INDONESIA BLOCK MUSK'S GROK

KUALA LUMPUR, 12 JAN

Malaysia and Indonesia have become the first countries to block Grok, the artificial intelligence chatbot developed by Elon Musk's xAI, after authorities said it was being misused to generate sexually explicit and non-consensual images.

The moves reflect growing global concern over generative AI tools that can produce realistic images, sound and text, while existing safeguards fail to prevent their abuse. The Grok chatbot, which is accessed through Musk's social media platform X, has been criticized for generating manipulated images, including depictions of women in bikinis or sexually explicit poses, as well as images involving children.

Regulators in the two Southeast Asian nations said existing controls were not preventing the creation and spread of fake pornographic content, particularly involving women and minors. Indonesia's government temporarily blocked access to Grok on Saturday, followed by Malaysia on Sunday.

The regulator said notices issued this month to X Corp. and xAI demanding stronger safeguards drew responses that relied mainly on user reporting mechanisms. Launched in 2023, Grok is free to use on X. Last summer the company added an image generator feature, Grok Imagine, that included a so-called "spicy mode" that can generate adult content. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Bhambri-Goransson eases into ASB Classic quarterfinals

AUCKLAND, 12 JAN

Top seeds Yuki Bhambri and Andre Goransson made a confident start to their campaign at the ASB Classic, cruising into the men's doubles quarterfinals with a straight-sets win on Monday. Bhambri and Goransson defeated wild card pairing Ajeet Rai and Jean-Julien Rojer 6-3, 6-2 in a first-round match, displaying sharp coordination and control throughout the contest. The Indo-Swedish duo dominated on serve and capitalised on key break opportunities to wrap up the match in just over an hour, underlining their strong form in the lead-up to the Australian Open. The top seeds saved three of the four breakpoints they faced in the contest and broke their rivals four times.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Gauff overtakes Anisimova for third spot

BRISBANE, 12 JAN

Coco Gauff overtook fellow American Amanda Anisimova to become World No. 3 while Switzerland's Belinda Bencic returned to the Top 10 in the latest WTA Rankings released on Monday, which will be used for the Australian Open 2026 draw. Last week, Gauff reached the United Cup semifinals with the USA while Anisimova was knocked out of the Brisbane International in the round of 16 by Marta Kostyuk, resulting in Anisimova and Gauff swapping the third and fourth spots. The Australian Open draw will be held in Melbourne on Thursday with former champion Aryna Sabalenka and Iga Swiatek as the top two seeds. Defending champion Madison Keys will be seeded ninth as she dropped two places after a quarterfinal-exit in Brisbane last week.—*PTI*

Diego Simeone offers apology to Vinicius Junior

LONDON, 12 JAN

Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone apologised to Real Madrid winger Vinicius Junior on Monday after the pair squared off in the Spanish Super Cup. Simeone bickered with Vinicius both during Atletico's 2-1 semi-final defeat on Thursday and after the Brazilian was substituted.The Argentine coach also said sorry to Real Madrid president Florentino Perez, after appearing to tell Vinicius that the Los Blancos chief would kick him out of the club."I would like to apologise to Mr Florentino and Mr Vinicius for the episode we saw—*PTI*

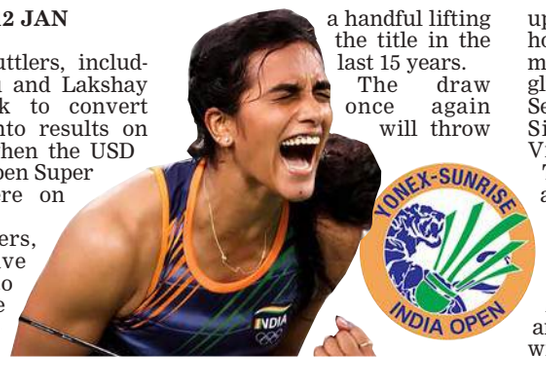
Former World No. 3 Raonic announces retirement

SYDNEY, 12 JAN

Canada's former World No. 3 Milos Raonic announced his retirement from tennis at the age of 35 on Sunday after winning eight ATP tour titles and more than USD 20 million in prize money over a decade and a half on the circuit.Notable for a powerful serve, which earned him the nickname 'Missile', Raonic's career peaked in 2016 when he reached the semifinals of the Australian Open and the final at Wimbledon, losing to Andy Murray in both contests."This is a moment you know will come one day, but somehow you never feel ready for it. This is as ready as I will ever be. Tennis has been my love and obsession for most of my life.—*PTI*

High hopes await home shuttlers at India Open Super 750

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN



India's top shuttlers, including PV Sindhu and Lakshay Sen, will look to convert recent form into results on home courts when the USD 950,000 India Open Super 750 begins here on Tuesday.

Indian players, however, have struggled to fully capitalise on home advantage, with only a handful lifting the title in the last 15 years.

The draw once again will throw up early challenges for the home contingent, including a marquee all-Indian men's singles opener between Lakshya Sen and Ayush Shetty, while Sindhu begins against Vietnam's Nguyen Thuy Linh.

The tournament, to be held at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, marked a timely lift for the two-time Olympic medallist after an injury-interrupted phase. Ayush, on the other hand, announced himself in 2025 by winning the US Open Super 300 and has beaten the likes of Kodai Naraoka, Loh Kean Yew, Chou Tien Chen, and Brian Yang. Last week, the 20-year-old from Karnataka, a bronze medallist at the 2023 World Junior Championships, upset Paris bronze medallist Malaysia's Lee Zii Jia in the first round.

Satwik-Chirag banking on India Open

The Indian men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty on Monday

said "one breakthrough title" can reignite a strong run as they look to revive their glory days at the USD 950,000 India Open Super 750.Despite finishing runners-up at the Hong Kong Open and China Masters, and winning a bronze at the World Championships, and qualifying for the knockout stage of the World Tour Finals last year, Chirag admitted the season felt underwhelming by their own lofty standards."-From the outside, it might seem like it wasn't the best year, especially since we didn't end up winning a title. I think we've set our expectations so high that for u,s anything less than a title feels below the mark," Chirag told PTI. —*PTI*

Padikkal, Nair power K'taka into 4th Hazare semis

Mumbai suffered a major blow when Sarfaraz was ruled out

BENGALURU, 12 JAN

Defending champions Karnataka stormed into their fourth successive Vijay Hazare Trophy semifinals with a thumping 54-run victory over Mumbai via the VJD method here on Monday.

With the tournament's leading run-getter Devdutt Padikkal (81 not out; 95 balls, 11x4) and veteran India batter Karun Nair (74 not out; 80 balls, 11x4) unbeaten, Karnataka were cruising at 187 for 1 in 33 overs while chasing a modest 255 when rain stopped play.

The VJD par score at that stage was 132, and with Karnataka 55 runs ahead, they were declared winners.

Earlier, heavyweights Mumbai, already without pacer Tushar Deshpande due to personal reasons, suffered a major blow when top batter Sarfaraz Khan (303 runs at 75.75) was ruled out after being struck on the finger during net practice.

In his absence, Mumbai managed only 254 for 8 after Karnataka skipper Mayank Agarwal opted to bowl at the BCCI Centre of Excellence Ground 1. In a largely one-man show, Shams Mulani struck an impressive 86 to hold the Mumbai innings together after a top-order collapse.

Mumbai were tottering at 60/4 in 17.2 overs before Mulani, and skipper Siddhesh Lad (38 off 58 balls; 4x4) added 76 runs for the sixth wicket.

After Lad's dismissal, Shedge and Kotian fell in quick succession, but Mulani held firm, scoring 86 from 91 balls with eight boundaries.

Brief Scores

Mumbai 254/8; 50 overs (Shams Mulani 86; Vidyadhar Patil 3/42, Vidwath Kaverappa 2/43, Abhilash Shetty 2/59) lost to Karnataka 187/1; 33 overs (Devdutt Padikkal 81 not out, Karun Nair 74 not out) by 54 runs via V J D method. —*PTI*

DESAI HITS TON AS SAURASHTRA EDGE OUT UP TO ENTER SEMIS

BENGALURU, 12 JAN

Skipper Harvik Desai led from the front with an unbeaten century as Saurashtra humbled fancied Uttar Pradesh by 17 runs via the VJD Method in a rain-interrupted game to enter the semifinals of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Monday.

Despite missing in-form wicket-keeper-batter Dhruv Jurel, who had linked up with the Indian team after an injury to Rishabh Pant, Uttar Pradesh did well to put up a challenging total of 310 for eight after being invited to bat first. In reply, Saurashtra were 238 for three in 40.1 overs when rain stopped play, and they emerged winners after the V. Jayadevan (VJD) method was applied.

Saurashtra needed 77 runs in the last 10 overs, a very gettable proposition with their captain going strong. —*PTI*

WOMEN'S PREMIER LEAGUE

MI to meet in-form Gujarat Giants

NAVI MUMBAI, 12 JAN

Having made their best-ever start to a season, Gujarat Giants would back themselves to get past defending champions Mumbai Indians in the Women's Premier League (WPL) here on Tuesday.

Giants have plenty of firepower in their batting, and that was on full display in their first two games, which they won after posting scores in excess of 200.

The win over Delhi Capitals on Sunday night is bound to boost their confidence as Sophie Devine was able to defend seven runs in the final on a batting beauty after smashing 95 off 42 balls at the top of the order.

Captain Ashleigh Gardner has led from the front, and by her own admission, she could not have asked for a better beginning to the fourth season of WPL.

"I felt like we stole that game (against DC), but I think they're the games that I guess give a lot of confidence in the change room and a lot of belief that we can kind of win from any position," said Gardner after the last over thriller against DC.

Gujarat Giants would, however, look to be more ruthless in their approach, having left a few runs out in the middle against Delhi Capitals.

The match starts 7.30 PM IST. —*PTI*

Behind closed doors...

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) could be forced to host two fixtures of the Women's Premier League (WPL), on 14 and 15 January, behind closed doors, as the police will not be able to provide adequate security due to the municipal corporation elections.

Surprise maiden India call-up for Ayush Badoni

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

Uncapped Ayush Badoni on Monday replaced Washington Sundar in India's squad for the remaining two ODIs against New Zealand after the all-rounder was ruled out due to a rib injury.

Washington suffered the injury in the series-opener in Vadodara on Sunday.The 26-year-old, who bowled five overs for 27 runs, walked off midway through the New Zealand innings and did not return to the field. Despite the discomfort, he later came out to bat at No. 8 as India picked up a four-wicket win."India all-rounder Washington Sundar reported an acute onset of discomfort in his left lower rib area while bowling during the first ODI against New Zealand at the BCA Stadium, Vadodara, on Sunday," said the BCCI in a statement."He will undergo further scans, following which the BCCI Medical Team will seek expert opinion. Badoni being named in the national squad means that he will miss Delhi's quarterfinal against Vidarbha in Bengaluru on Tuesday.

Badoni, primarily a batter who bowls off-spin, has captained Delhi and was deputy to Rishabh Pant in the team's latest Vijay Hazare Trophy campaign. The 26-year-old rose to prominence with his performances for Lucknow Super Giants in the Indian Premier League, where he played under the mentorship of current India head coach Gautam Gambhir.While Badoni has a batting average of 57.96 in first-class cricket, his List A returns are not that impressive. —*PTI*

You don't contain greats like Kohli: Kyle

VADODARA, 12 JAN

Having been both a rival and a teammate to Virat Kohli, New Zealand all-rounder Kyle Jamieson says he can only marvel at the Indian superstar's craft as he operates at a "different level", one where great batters have their way even if bowlers try to contain them.

Kohli looked set for a record-extending 54th ODI century on Sunday in the opening ODI against the Kiwis that India won by four wickets. However, Kohli fell seven runs short of his milestone when the imposing Kiwi bowler had him caught at mid-off for 93.

Jamieson, who has shared the dressing room with Kohli at Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the IPL, said it's tough to determine if the Indian batter has been at his best right now.

"It's hard to say from an opposition point of view whether this is the best version of him or not he's been pretty good for a long time, right?" Jamieson told the media after Sunday's loss.

"You feel every time you come up against him, you've got to be at your absolute best to even compete. He's on a different level; he plays the game on a different level to most cricketers (and he looked pretty good for the most part. —*PTI*

T20 WORLD CUP 2026

ICC UNLIKELY TO ACCEPT BANGLADESH'S SECURITY CONCERNS

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday indicated that it is unlikely to accept Bangladesh's demand for a change of venue for its T20 World Cup matches in India after an assessment report of the country's security concerns placed the threat perception at "low".

As per ICC sources, the world body's risk assessment report does not flag any specific or direct threat to the Bangladesh team if it participates in the tournament starting 7 February. It also contradicts claims made by Bangladesh sports ministry advisor Asif Nazrul that Mustafizur Rahman's inclusion in the team would contribute to the overall threat. Bangladesh is due to play four league stage matches in India.

"It is important to clarify that the ICC's independent risk assessments, carried out by internationally recognised security experts, do not conclude that Bangladesh cannot play its scheduled matches in India. —*PTI*

Saeed Ajmal attacks ICC

Former Pakistan off-spinner Saeed Ajmal on Monday said the International Cricket Council (ICC) would become "unnecessary" if it fails to deal with the current "dominance" of the Indian Cricket Board (BCCI) in its functioning.

MINISTRY ASKS NSFS TO FORM COMMITTEES TO LIAISE WITH INT'L BODIES

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

The Sports Ministry on Monday asked every national federation to constitute a "Committee on International Relations" that would be tasked with the job of ensuring better cooperation with international bodies on issues such as joint training programmes and hosting of major competitions in India.

In its communication to the National Sports Federations (NSFs), the ministry said the committee should comprise senior members of the federation, former international athletes, coaches and "subject experts with proven experience in global sports administration and diplomacy."

"The details of the Committee, including its composition and terms of reference, may kindly be communicated to this Ministry within 30 days from the date of issuance of this advisory," the Ministry letter to the NSFs, which has PTI, stated.

The advisory comes a few days after Sports Secretary Hari Ranjan Rao urged NSF officials to leave day-to-day administration to CEOs and focus on building ties internationally for India's benefit.

"You are the vision builders, you are not administrators. You require professional administrators in your organisation who handle the day-to-day business while you network with international bodies and plan the pyramid of growth," he had stated in Ahmedabad last week.

"You should be able to facilitate a process by which our leadership is on first name basis with the international body representatives," he had said while unveiling the medal strategy for the next decade. —*PTI*

SG PIPERS BEAT HYDERABAD TOOFANS 2-1

RANCHI, 12 JAN

SG Pipers secured their first win of the season, prevailing 2-1 against Hyderabad Toofans in the Men's Hockey India League (HIL) here Monday.

Tomas Domene bagged a brace for the winners, while goalkeeper Tomas Santiago was remarkable between the sticks. For the Toofans, Amandeep Lakra got on the scoresheet at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Astro Turf Hockey Stadium. —*PTI*

LAUNCHES NOED PROGRAMME

IOA 'reactivates' National Olympic Academy

NEW DELHI, 12 JAN

Calling it a major step towards strengthening the Olympic movement in India, the IOA on Monday announced the "formal reactivation" of a National Olympic Academy (NOA) in Ahmedabad, with its President and sprint legend PT Usha leading the facility's management.

The IOA (Indian Olympic Association) also said that a National Olympic Education and Development Programme (NOEDP) will be launched. "The IOA General House unanimously approved President P T Usha as the President of the National Olympic Academy, and Shri Gagan Narang, Vice President of the IOA and Olympic medallist, as the Director of the National Olympic Academy," the body stated in a press release.

India had a Bharat Centre of Olympic Research and Education (BCROE) at the Rashtriya Raksha University in Gandhinagar. While the NOA has existed since 2018, its operations were stalled due to various reasons, including the COVID-19 pandemic. "This National Olympic Academy has been there since 2018, but remained inactive due to reasons which include the pandemic. That's why we are saying it's a reactivation," IOA CEO Raghuram Iyer told PTI.

The decisions were taken during the IOA (Indian Olympic Association) Executive Council meeting held on 8 January and were unanimously endorsed by the IOA General House at its Annual General Meeting on 9 January. Both meetings were held in Ahmedabad. —*PTI*